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By John Ainslie
Hr.

AURUNGZEBE;

OR,

A TALE OF ALRASCHID.

"Ye proud oppressors, whose vain hearts exult,
In wantonness of power; 'gainst the brute race,
Fierce robbers like yourselves, a guiltless war
Wage uncontrolled; here quench your thirst of blood;
But learn from Aurungzebe to spare mankind."
SOMERVILLE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY, LEA, & BLANCHARD.

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PREFACE.

“ A PREFACE !—What, sir, is a preface ?” demanded an author of a wit.—“ Why,” replied the latter, “ it is that beginning of a book which every one condemns—every other person writes—and every third person reads.”

Two things frequently frighten novel readers (unless extraordinarily curious or voracious) from Eastern Tales. The first is a dread of meeting a multitude of jaw-breaking unintelligible words ;—and the second, a suspicion that the actions described are fabulous, or may be so from the *terra incognita* where they occur. Good fire-side folks are aware that a facility of embroidery belongs to our genus,—and, besides this, they think nothing interesting can be associated with what is distant and dusky. On the contrary, however, there are those whose luxurious imaginations revel in the scenes of Eastern climes, and the ideas associated with them ; and whose souls warm into enthusiasm at the recollection of those hours passed at the idle school-boy’s desk, when they hung enchanted over the absorbing tales of the heroic Schezerade. To

these, then, we must trust; and if our pages want the glowing genius of the doomed Sultana, we hope they will be found somewhat more assimilated with the taste of the day.

Our story is historical and true; and every local scene drawn,—not from the *camera lucida* of fancy, but from personal observation. We quite agree with Lafeu that “a good traveller is something at the latter end of a dinner; but one that lies three thirds, and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once heard, and thrice beaten.”

Thus much for the preamble—the rest, gentle reader, is for you.

AURUNGZEBE.

CHAPTER I.

**"What cannot praise effect in Mighty minds,
When Flattery soothes, and when Ambition blinds?
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet sprung from high is of celestial seed:—
In God 'tis glory; and when men aspire
'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire."**

DRYDEN.

To the proper understanding of any story, some political sketch of the times in which it occurred is generally requisite, but with regard to ours it is absolutely indispensable. For it is no more to be expected, than perhaps wished, that our readers should be acquainted with the ambitious strifes, and intrigues of eastern monarchs; wherefore we must first pioneer the path to amusement by a few shovels-full of dusty history—as few you may rely as possible.

Churram, or as he was afterwards styled Shaw Jehan, on the death of his father Jehangire (against whom he had long waged a most unnatural war) obtained the imperial sceptre,—but this was not effected without the dagger and the bowl; the blood of brothers, nephews, kinsmen, and many nobility having watered the steps by which he at length mounted the musnud of the Moguls.

To European nations, such savage means of acquiring

and maintaining power appear more revolting, from regal succession being so well established and understood, whereas in Asia they are esteemed less heinous from the circumstances which produce them.

Our rights of primogeniture were never recognised in Hindoostan, the choice of the dying monarch being the sole legal title to succession; and accordingly where there were several sons, the inefficiency of such an expression of will can easily be imagined. Few instances therefore occur of an eastern despot dying without bequeathing to his empire a civil war—a civil war, unsparing and exterminating, in which one of his descendants after crushing all rivals secures himself on the throne, by the cruelly jealous policy of murdering or confining for life every relative whose proximity might compromise his safety. Death indeed would in many cases have been clemency, for these unhappy wretches when immured in the rocky fastnesses of a Gualior or Monghir were often forced to drink daily a quantity of liquid infused with poppy which gradually debilitated their frames, and debased their understandings, till they were transformed into confirmed slaving idiots, alike disgusting to their keepers, and harmless to their tyrants.

It was in the year 1628, Shaw Jehan having rendered the earth a desert to himself in kindred, ascended the throne of the house of Timour, with the title of “The planet of the faith—the second king of fortunate conjunctions—Mahommed, king of the world.”—The first years of his reign passed away in the lap of fortune—everything went well with him, or better than he could have wished. Shaw Abbas, the sage and ambitious Persian king, who had molested grievously his father Jehangire, died, leaving his vast possessions to an imbecile grandson. Petty rebellions were effectually crushed, and a fierce inroad of Usbecs punished by the celebrated general Mohabet, who acted in these days pretty much the part of our Earl Warwick, the king maker. All this success was however but the harbinger of misery—it was the

pleasing lull which preludes the hurricane—the honey which disguises the destroying poison. And midst all this prosperity, Providence seemed fostering retributive vengeance on the head of this spendthrift of blood. The famous Arjemund Banu, his favourite sultana, brought her royal master no less than twenty children, six only of which need here be mentioned. The eldest was the Princess Jehanara—the second, Prince Dara—the third, Suja—the fourth, the Princess Roehenara—the fifth, Aurungzebe—and his brother Morad. All these as they grew up, with the exception of the eldest, who was much attached to her father, joined in every rebellion and intrigue against their parent; a moderate volume would not contain the plots, treasons, factions, and battles which eventually took place amongst these enumerated Princes; suffice it to mention the upshot of much crime, duplicity, and bravery. Aurungzebe at length succeeded in outwitting or defeating all his fraternal opponents, and when our story opens had shut up his father in the fort of Agra, an indulged prisoner. Prince Dara was murdered by him after undergoing many unworthy indignities, Morad was imprisoned—and Suja alone remained to wage ineffectual war against his crafty talented brother, who sat more safely on the throne than his most sanguine expectations could have carried him. We will hereafter have occasion to say more of Aurungzebe's character, fearing to commence with too much musty, but necessary information.

CHAPTER II.

"The best of men have ever loved repose,
 They hate to mingle in the filthy fray
 Where the soul sours, and gradual rancour grows,
 Embittered more from peevish day to day—
 Even those whom Fame has lent her fairest ray.
 The most renowned of worthy wights of yore,
 From a base world at last have stolen away,
 So Scipio to the soft Cumæan shore,
 Retiring, tasted joys he never knew before."

THOMSON.

NEAR that most ancient city Ougien, by eastern poets justly styled "the beautiful," lived Ajimut, a descendant from one of the younger branches of the royal house of Persia.—Family feuds and misfortunes had exiled him from his paternal plains beyond Caubul, and for upwards of twenty years his prayers and aspirations after home had been poured fruitlessly forth in a lowly Indian cottage. This humble retreat was situated on the Sipra, which passes near Ougien, a stream regarded by Hindoos as pre-eminently holy, and even declared by them at times to flow with milk, a phenomenon easily accounted for from the whitish loam composing its banks, and which, during high floods, imparts that chalky tinge whence originates the fable. Although there was nothing about Ajimut's abode save neatness, worthy of notice, its site deservedly commanded admiration. A lofty tope or grove of aged and umbrageous tamarind trees (beneath which were the tombs of two mussulman saints) completely screened a small garden, and amongst its overgrown shrubs lay embossed his thatched clay-constructed cottage. According to oriental taste, this garden was

little better than a promiscuous assemblage of flowers and fruits which grew nearly as nature dictated: here a ruddy cluster of the richest roses gladdened the eye—there the citron or orange with Hesperian balls bent beneath its riches as the miser's soul is burdened by his wealth—and in another place an informal ineffectual fence of yellow borbul perfumed the languid breeze which loved to linger, and be wooed wearily by the long glossy plantains—whilst above them the solemn mango outstretched its sombre fostering foliage—and along the foot of this sweet enclosure rolled the noiseless Sipra. Ajimut, more from the motive of finding a solace to cankering care, than any desire of amassing riches; had given his attention to business, particularly agriculture; and he acquired considerable wealth, though little reputation, for a stranger in the east is rarely much respected by indigenous neighbours. This however gave him satisfaction rather than chagrin, for an unobtruded retirement when he desired solitude was what he regarded as the most substantial enjoyment life affords, and it undeniably is one which, as the mind becomes more satiated with what this unsatisfying universe contains, appears the more truly valuable. Devoid of pride, he was above courting either society or fame, and his days died innocently away in the pursuit of his avocations, and in the bosom of a family consisting of his wife, a son, and daughter.

Alraschid the elder was fair as the dawn: tall, erect, and of elegant symmetry. His features were faultless, unless an eye severely critical might have pronounced them somewhat feminine, for his otherwise manly appearance. His sister, though not so passing beautiful for her sex, was yet more than ordinarily handsome, and her countenance was ever lighted up with an undescribable expression of good humour, which bespoke a heart lightly at ease, and a wit playful enough to tease were it not chastened by too delicate feelings to injure or offend. Somewhat above the ordinary female stature, this cir-

cumstance, instead of having any displeasing effect, assisted happily to rivet the eye on the matchless proportions of her form—such was Rhada, the tender counterpart of her brother; and their minds were equally harmonized as their graces. He was bold, affectionate, ardent;—she, tender-hearted, full of hope and joy; no wonder then such children engrossed the souls of their parents; made them indifferent to the frowns and smiles of all around, and even dulled the rarely blunted edge of banishment.

Some distance from Ajimut, but also on the river, dwelt Selim, governor of the district, who, although detested by every one on account of his cruelty and rapaciousness, had ever been a favourite with his sovereign. —It was during Shaw Jehan's reign, that by means of his skilfully applied wealth, Selim became vested with the pompous titles of Nawob, Bahandr, Omrah of ten thousand, and despotic jurisdiction over an extensive territory. Bribery will attain remoter ends in Asia, than Europeans can imagine. To be rich is to be certainly powerful—as for honourable distinctions they are not as with us hereditary, but ephemeral as they are empty, dying always with the holder, and often before him on a reverse of fortune. Notwithstanding however the notorious venality of those viziers and court favourites who endeavoured to hoodwink the Emperor, and prevent his taking cognizance of Selim's real character, complaints reached the royal ear.—With his faults and crimes, Shaw Jehan was a lover of justice, and nothing could have prevented the governor experiencing that monarch's indignation, but some circumstances we have already alluded to—for he was himself doomed to experience the mutability of all earthly grandeur—to fall a victim to the unfilial feuds of his family, and die uncrowned.

On Aurungzebe being established on the throne, the chance of retribution falling on Selim's head verged to a certainty—for no complaint was ever known to be disregarded by him, and he besides had secret emissaries in

every part of his dominions, whose business it was to report instances of oppression, where the injured feared to appeal—Conscious of the dangers that surrounded him, Selim's secret intrigues were unceasingly exerted for deposing Aurungzebe, and reinstating his imprisoned father. Conceiving justly as he did that times of discord and confusion were likely to postpone the reckoning of his enormities, and that should Shaw Jehan be restored, gratitude for his services might make them be altogether forgotten.

Selim's first and favourite wife had died shortly after presenting him with the only child, (a daughter,) with which he was blessed. Noorun, as she grew up became exquisitely lovely—her face was softer than the lotus of Jumna, and her eyes brighter than the lambent lightnings of even, when the dimpled moon smiles through her gauzy canopy.—Though without almost any exception, Asiatic maidens have dark eyes and raven hair, yet is there no less difference in their charms than with us, where a much greater diversity of shades and complexions exist. This proves the mind to be in an eminent degree the moulder of beauty. How different are the same features in different individuals? In one, the eyes are perhaps sluggishly inanimate, whilst in another they sparkle, and absolutely scintillate witchery! Were we therefore to attempt conveying a notion of the Rajah's daughter by merely enumerating the items of her portrait, we should but recapitulate the description we have already given of Rhada, and yet the girls were very dissimilar.—Noorun was not flippant and jocund, but rather pensive and contemplative; her long glossy eye-lashes, fringed eyes bright as ever beamed, but which seldom dilated with mirthful playfulness; on the contrary, they seemed ever swimming with that coy affection and winning tenderness which are equally effectual for ensnaring the heart as the sprightliest glances. We will not however anticipate further either Noorun's character or appearance, but merely state she was doted on by a father whose

every act of injustice to his subjects was equalled by kindness and indulgence towards her.

Ajimut had espoused the daughter of an Ougien merchant, who having become opulent had gone and settled in Agra, which was then one of the largest and richest cities in India. Business matters had caused him afterwards to revisit that part of the country, and being excessively fond of his grandson, nothing would prevent him taking him back with him, under the pretext of improving his mind by the tuition of the able doctors of the place; although the real motive was a wish for his company.—For a long time both father and mother held out against this proposal, but finding the grandfather equally pertinacious they at length agreed, provided he did not exceed a year, which was half the time demanded. This was yielded, and Alraschid set out in his sixteenth year for a place, which afterwards chiefly governed the complexion of his fortunes. The modern city of Agra is but a wreck, a shadow of what it was at the era of our story. It was then second only to Delhi in splendour and importance, and celebrated all over the eastern world for the number of its princely palaces and beautiful gardens. Formerly the Jumna, a large and rapid tributary of the Ganges, divided it into nearly two equal parts, and its banks were for miles lined with the magnificent mansions of the powerful Omrahs and officers of state.

But now the city is almost circumscribed to a despicable bazaar on the right bank of the river adjoining the celebrated fort.—There is perhaps no place in Hindoostan which can afford more scope for a moralising traveller than Agra. He beholds the inanity of human ambition,—the vast disparity betwixt man's power,—and his wishes and intentions,—the general foolishness and feebleness of his race, depicted as in a panorama. With melancholy surprise he sees the impotence of the most powerful potentates with respect to the direction of empires or their institutions, when they themselves have sunk into the sleep of death.—He in short sees changes

as applicable to humanity in its every mode demonstrated.

Could any of the imperial houses of Timour rise from the grave, and see how their mightiness has crumbled—how their cities are turned into hamlets—their mosques and fortresses into ruins—and their kingdoms become the possessions of sordid and distant strangers,—strangers utterly in blood, language, and religion, and themselves subjects to a monarch barely entrusted with prerogative—how would their kingly pride be humbled!

The plains for miles around the present town are encumbered with shapeless masses of bricks, stones and mortar, the remnants of beautiful edifices; and here and there are the fading relics of some garden surrounded by its ruined wall, with perchance a high tastefully arched entrance, composed of hewn stone, and adorned with pieces of black and white marble cut very exactly, and inlaid in various devices.—The produce of these enclosures consists only of a russet tinted grass, and so scanty, as to surprise one how the lazy buffaloes or famished looking sheep that have strayed there, can pick up a mouthful. A few goats may also occasionally be seen scrambling amongst the rubbish, and foraging in a manner much more jocund than well accords with the desolation of the scene. In the midst of all this dismal demolition, rise two equally celebrated fabrics. One is the famous Tajmahal, in which are entombed Shaw Jehan and his sultana; the other, the fort. Of the Taj, which rises like a phoenix from her ashes, and has justly been considered as the most exquisite epitome of costly and beautifully executed masonry in the world, we may hereafter speak; at present, however, we must pass on to the fort in which we are more interested.

It is no easy matter to convey on paper a correct idea of edifices perfectly different in appearance and style from any we have before seen, and which those who read never have, and such is the case with respect to the fort of Agra.—But let us imagine a wall of perhaps

fifty feet high, composed of a red smoothly polished stone, emerging from a deep moat, behind which towers another immensely lofty one, in some places above a hundred feet, its top being regularly divided by deep embrasures. Let us then imagine these two walls and moat enclosing several acres of ground, in the figure nearly of a parallelogram, covered with clusters of irregular buildings, spires and cupolas, and we have a general conception of its appearance. It is built close to the river, and the entrance on the north is defended by a drawbridge, over which are a number of complicated galleries, and ramparts in the form of a crescent, with its bend swelling outwards, capable of containing a considerable number of men. Passing the drawbridge, a wide pavement leads to the interior of the works with a gradual ascent, and a stranger is surprised on gaining the central space at which this path terminates, to find that the fort is a small eminence scarped and faced with masonry at one place, and surrounded on all others by the afore-mentioned lofty curtains from this unevenness of ground. The buildings are very irregular; there are several squares snugly seated in the hollows, to which many flights of stone steps and galleries lead from the ramparts above; and behind these in the remotest part of the works is the palace of Shaw Jehan.

This is an assemblage of elegant edifices adapted to the nature of the surface; and its general features are a small garden, surrounded on all sides by pretty high houses, excepting that next the river, which forms a broad terrace. Upon the terrace was then and still remains, an immense slab of black marble, where the Emperor of India was wont to sit of an evening, and meditate on his ruined fortunes. This court, as it may be called, contained all the different apartments customary to eastern royalty, and all of them have even now traces of their former magnificence. The hall of audience was minutely splendid, the walls being entirely inlaid with mosaic work in numerous patterns of leaves

and flowers.—Many other chambers, more especially the treasurer's or Dewan's office, were thus decorated; but the most gorgeous of all were the baths.—These besides having all the expensive decorations of the other rooms were literally otherwise covered with gilding and mirror glass.—As with us, this glass was not disposed in single plates, but in minute pieces neatly fitted together, and in various figures.—It was sometimes a brilliant edging to golden flowers, and mosaics of blood stone and cornelian; and often in form of a diamond or crescent. Even the ceilings of the two chambers, of which the goselkannah consisted, were similarly inlaid, and the effect produced when lighted with lamps, as was usually the case when visited by Shaw Jehan, must have been indescribably grand and dazzling.

Were it not for fear of engrossing too much time, we might risk a longer and minuter description of what the fort then was. We might expatiate for several pages on the exquisitely beautiful chapel with its curious pavement portioned out in equal spaces for devotees, and astonish the fair reader by telling of that wonderful piece of ordinance which now lies immoveable in the river sands, but which then rested proudly on the ramparts. We must however proceed with what pertains more directly to our tale; otherwise Heaven knows when 'twill be told.

It was on one of those sickeningly sultry September evenings, that two young men were seated on the highest rampart of the fort nearest the Jumna, vainly longing for a freshening gust from the water to cool their throbbing veins.—The one who was of a strong, though not well proportioned make, was in a showy military dress, and his wide white silk trousers were gathered in so as to fit closely to his ancle, and display a foot not badly made, but done considerable injustice to, by an ungainly long pointed red shoe.—His waist was girt by a handsome crimson cashmere shawl, which supported a stiletto of curious manufacture; his turban was of muslin, and on

it glistened a valuable jewel, whilst round his neck hung a massive gold chain to which was attached a locket containing of course some certain infallible charm. His tunic or jacket was of a green silk, heavily embroidered in front with gold and strings of seed pearl, which ornaments extended also from the wrist a considerable way up the arm. This bravely attired young man was seated cross-legged on a large cushion, covered with a cool Chinese mat, whilst at his feet lay a scymitar with a silver handle, and red velvet scabbard, as also a white cashmere shawl, which the sultriness of the weather had caused him to relinquish.

He was lazily inhaling the contents of a magnificent hookah, the bottom of which was fine European crystal, whilst its long coiled up snake, interwoven at intervals with gold threads and various bright coloured silks, formed a cheque exceedingly pleasing. The mouth piece which was intended to represent in miniature a bird of paradise, had a gaudy splendour, and the artist by means of paling or deepening the colour of his metal and a judicious conjunction of precious stones, had to say the least been tolerably successful; at a respectable éar-shot distance, stood a knot of attendants ready to start at any signal, whilst at his feet sat a handsome and gaily appparelled page.

This youngster seemed conscious of his good looks, for his turban was stuck somewhat conceitedly on one side, by which means a few raven ringlets that any prisoner of the haram would have envied, were permitted to fall down a well turned neck, which but for the fervent beams of his native sun would have been alabaster. In his hand he twisted thoughtfully the gilt handle of a chamur, which is the snowy tail of the Thibet bull, used for whisking away flies. This showed his menial capacity, though it was contradicted by the privilege of being seated.

The bustle and animation of the scene which these two young men overlooked, was almost sufficient to

have weaned away a consciousness of the suffocating heat. Innumerable boats were plying about in all directions, some heavily laden, and with wide sails uselessly unfurled, were being dragged up the stream by long trains of boatmen, whilst their pilots or manjees sat listless smoking at the long rudders which guided them. Others again were darting rapidly along, transporting personages of distinction, to some of the stately palaces on the river's side.

Some of these barges or budgerowes were fitted up with splendid awnings, gilded poles and streamers, and many happy groupes might be seen making little pleasure excursions, whilst song and music swelled over the waters. Far as eye could reach along either bank, there sparkled numberless little fires of the boatmen and ferry-men, who after the day's labour, were preparing their meals or smoking, and many a hearty burst of laughter declared the joyous levity with which this cessation of toil was spent by them.

"Alas!" exclaimed the personage we first described; "it seems to me but yesterday, when every feeling and thought you have now recapitulated, my mind also would have coined; its die is, however, now changed—and no one on comparison could tell that its present impression of things is struck by the same instrument. Who can witness all that thoughtless mirth and inactivity without being convinced of the extreme folly of those who toil, and plot, and ponder, and make themselves miserable, for the sake of having a nominal control over a pack of fellow-creatures, who never trouble their heads about the matter? See," continued he, nodding his head which rested on his hand towards a noisy group of boatmen, whilst a smile slightly cynical mantled his lips: "See yon knot of naked indigent men—is there, I would ask, half so much happiness, half so much security in the whole Emperor's durbar as amongst them? I tell thee, Alraschid, the higher man's wishes tower, the further generally are they removed from sense and enjoyment.

The loftier branches of a tree are the oftenest rocked and rent by the breeze. Contentment, my friend, is the nearest earthly approximation to happiness. As for ambition—'tis but a glutless, insatiable longing, the greatest curse with which man can be afflicted."

"So far perchance, Prince," replied the page, "as earthly matters are concerned. Are not however our expectations of a better state hereafter, but the vastest expansion of human ambition?—a steadfast desire which the weak uneducated mind can aim at as confidently, as the most subtle and best gifted; and who would wish to be ignorant of such glorious aspirations?"

"Nay," replied the Prince, for it was Mahommed the son of Aurungzebe, "it appears to me, that in this there is a difference. He who seeks temporal greatness or fame, does not necessarily seek virtue; though I admit he seeks happiness erroneously; whereas he who looks forward to paradise, must seek virtue. Now the sentiments which lead to virtue, and consequently to a hope of future felicity, are different from those which usually prompt us to acquire worldly greatness; and unless you maintain that our every thought and action can be reduced to selfishness (which I admit not) a dissimilarity must certainly exist betwixt them."

"I am not philosopher enough," answered Alraschid, "to argue with, much less confute you; but methinks you must have either very little ambition, or very great resolution to withstand the tempting bribery and great promises of your grandfather."

"No one," replied the Prince, "can assume any merit for performing properly his duty. But if ever human being's strongest passions were put to the test, mine have been:—my cupidity, ambition, even my very affections. This very day, Alraschid, my grandfather sent for me, and used every means to induce me to prove perfidious. 'Mahommed,' said he, pointing to the imperial crown suspended over his head, 'release me from the bonds by which an unfeeling son has shackled me,

and thou shalt be my successor in the empire. By this sacred book,' taking up the koran which lay near him, 'I swear it!' It was then, my friend, that for the first time I wavered; temptation struck me with all her mightiness, and I staggered beneath her blow. Bright visions of greatness flitted athwart mine eyes. I saw myself the sceptred master of millions of slaves; my throne surrounded by prostrate princes, and every maddest conception suddenly realized. Principle, however, or filial affection, triumphed after a brief but distracting struggle over selfishness and ambition. I firmly refused."

"Yet in such a manner I trust," replied his companion, "as to show that instead of intending to trifle with his feelings; you sympathised in his sorrows."

"Assuredly," replied the Prince; "and hard must the heart have been which felt not for a hoary uncrowned relative, who petitioned for pity and assistance; who wept before his progeny and begged their help, their blessing! O yes! I pity him, Alraschid, though the indignity he now undergoes, may be considered as but heaven's retribution for his own unwarrantable actions!"

"True," answered his companion, "I have heard that Shaw Jehan waded through much kindred blood, e'er he thought himself secure upon the musmud, whereas your father, without having recourse to such inhuman, sanguinary. . . ."

"Silence!" exclaimed Mahommed, whose brows had gradually become knit and scowling as Alraschid proceeded with his observations; "darest thou before my face apply such opprobrious epithets to any of the illustrious house of Timour?"

"Pardon me, I prithee; pardon me," responded Alraschid, "the expressions inadvertently escaped me. I were base and altogether unworthy of the honours heaped upon me by you, if any intentional disrespect towards your father or any of his ancestors proceeded from my lips."

"Enough," replied the Prince, "for in sooth, now I have subdued an intemperance of which I should feel ashamed—you have said nothing but what is true. Shaw Jehan was a murderer—and so is my father—the blood of my uncle is still reeking before heaven. Oh! my son, into what a labyrinth of crime and misery will ambition plunge weak humanity!"

"Your highness," replied the page, "must feel serenely happy at having had the fortitude to withstand a temptation which has almost invariably been too strong for man—and proved but the golden lure to unquietness."

"Happy!" reiterated Mahommed with an agonized expression of feature and letting fall his hookah, "God grant, boy, you may never know my happiness!—if principle once made a mighty conquest over passion—it was but to render me more susceptible of regret and misery. I am at heart boundlessly ambitious, and now pant after what I so foolishly spurned. That I was virtuous enough, or as I esteem it, simple enough, not to liberate my grandfather, and be his successor, is the gnawing reflection beneath which I now writhe—but it matters not; do what we please, it is but fulfilling the destinies of our poor nature. Boy!" continued he after a pause, "were you ever in love?"

"Never as yet, my lord," responded his attendant, with a smile and half bashful confusion which he could not repress.

"Then," replied the Prince, with that commanding manner which birth and power had made natural to him, even in common conversation, "I would have you take special heed how you fall in love. On doing so, must hinge your whole prosperity and peace. Love, my friend, has ruined more nations than hatred. It has blinded the clearest sighted—unstrung the bows of the strong, and bowed virtue and wisdom to the ground. Love is a mighty gambler—men—nations—empires are his stakes, and hearts the dice he throws!—Beware, Al-raschid, how you fall in love."

"My lord," replied the page, "I have somewhere seen woman's pure and undivided love compared to the priceless Mogul diamond. Power, grandeur, wealth may be acquired by ceaseless importunities at the shrine of fortune, but not such a jewel as it, or flawless love. I have often dreamed that were I even as noble and great as your highness, I would gladly forego everything on earth before the affections of her who loved me dearly."

"So, so you dream," answered Mahommed disconsolately after a pause, letting his eyes at the same time fall upon his companion, as if to sift the sincerity of his enthusiasm. "I once dreamt so; but as such devoted love in woman is seldom, if ever to be met with, so is a perfect divestment of all selfishness on our part not to be respected. When the mind has long been pampered—when it has been wont to exact, and know no refusal—receiving to each of its loftiest wishes an over ready sacrifice—love must indeed be irresistible that can in such circumstances make a perfect convert—and yet, though rarely, it is sometimes so. Yes, it is my destiny to perish by such love!" And as he spoke these words, he struggled against the violence of his feelings. Astonished as was his companion at being so unexpectedly made the confidant of so extraordinary a disclosure, fear and etiquette alike forbade him to make any observation; accordingly with his hands crossed upon his breast, and downcast eyes, he remained perfectly silent. The delicacy of the motive did not escape Mahommed's shrewd observance, who having regained possession of his customary composure resumed as follows:

"My son, you have been witness of your master's weakness, and perchance rashly entrusted by him, with what he ought never to have divulged. As you value his friendship and your life, beware how you breathe to human being, that the son of Aurungzebe can be so worked upon by woman!"

"Your word," replied Alraschid bowing his head,

"is law; and the life of your slave is ever in your hands."

A long pause succeeded, the Prince was wrapt in contemplation, and although his eyes were fixed on the river which now glanced partially in the palid moonbeams, now skulked gloomily along beneath its high cowering banks, his thoughts were evidently elsewhere. The page knew better the mood of his master than to interrupt him, and awaited patiently his pleasure to renew the conversation.

"Son of Ajimut," said he at length, "were I to go again to the wars, would you choose to follow me?"

Alraschid was too surprised at this strange speech to answer on the moment; after gaping shortly in the Prince's face, he answered:

"As long as life and limb afforded, my lord, I would follow you. May I ask if my master questions the fealty of his servant?"

"Supposing," continued Mahommed without answering him, "I were to raise an army—restore my ill-used grandfather, and shut up my father in this costly dungeon, would your duty and affection still prompt you to follow me?"

The agitated features, faltering lips, and throbbing bosom of the page conveyed the sentiments, which he for awhile feared to express.

"Your Highness," said he flurridly, "would do me greater justice if you contemned or banished me, rather than required my attendance in such circumstances; for the oath of eternal allegiance to your father, which I took on entering this fort, would make me court death, and your frown sooner than dishonour."

"In short," interrupted the Prince, "you would if it were in your power, turn your back upon your patron—upon your master, who found you seated in the bazaar a miserable account-keeper of a miserly uncle, and who has honored you by his friendship and confidence—is such conduct generous?"

"Oh my benefactor!" exclaimed the boy throwing himself on his knees, whilst the tears gushed plentifully from his eyes, "if I have in word or thought offended, punish me, discard me—I am not ungrateful—can I not, must I not for ever feel your unmerited kindness? the condescension and friendship you have shown one so unworthy? It is my anxiety to show I do appreciate, and am not wholly unworthy of your favour, that makes me refuse, even at your solicitation, to do what impugns my honour. My lord, if I could spurn an oath, I could deceive you; and believe me, I am alike incapable of either."

Mahommed sat for some time regarding his protégé with a look more of compassion than disappointment.

"Get thee to thy feet, foolish lad," said he, "and dry your eyes; I have made essay of thy virtue, and as usual found it unassailable. Let not, however, thy memory be so treacherous as to recount to any one the means I have chosen for proving it; and moreover, hold thyself prepared by to-morrow evening to set out for Ougien."

If the page's grief had been poignant at what had already passed, it was now quite ungovernable. He had offended a kind, beloved friend, even to being dismissed his service, and again casting himself on the ground, he sobbed so bitterly as to prevent his speaking.

"Come, come," cried the Prince, "there is too much childishness in this. Believe me, nothing is done from anger, but affection, nor shall you ever receive injury from Mahommed. What you sillily conceive a dismissal, is but a confidential mission. I know of no person so trust-worthy as yourself, and you will now have an opportunity of seeing those dear parents for which I have heard so many of your longings."—Never did cloud roll more rapidly across the moon, than changed Alraschid's countenance, and he poured forth a string of incoherent thanks and exclamations, none of which we hold worthy of being engrossed in this dignified narrative.

Leaving him therefore to the enjoyment of so joyous a journey, we will turn our attention to other personages.

CHAPTER III.

" Know ye not

How your state stands i' th' world, with the whole world ?
Your foes are many and not small; their practises,
Must bear the same proportion: and not even
The justice and the truth o' th' question carries
The due o' th' verdict with it."

K. HENRY VIII.

NEARLY fronting Selim's majestic mansion, and on the opposite side of the river, stood a small mosque, and near it a single cottage, shadowed by a solitary banian tree. This little mosque, though of superior workmanship, was after the fashion of most others. A simple cupola of oriental shape stood supported by an octagonal substructure, composed of ashler stone, and relieved by eight small latticed windows, each of which was elegantly and fancifully chiselled out of a single slab. In the centre of the floor fronting the door, was the tomb of some canonized moslem, covered with a green sheet, and on which were strewn white and yellow flowers, the pious attention of an officiating priest, who possessed the adjoining cottage. The roof of the building inside was delicately carved, the cornice ornaments being koran texts in Arabian characters, intertwined in tasteful regularity.—But these were considerably blackened by the fumes of a lamp which was kept constantly burning.

Close to the mosque was a flat stucco terrace or cheboutra, with a high wall on the side towards Mecca, decorated by three pretty though small minarets ; this was the place in which the priest's little flock were wont to prefer their daily orisons. The cottage was nothing but a thatched mud tenement of the rudest kind, before which

was stuck a long bamboo, with a piece of red cloth as a streamer to allure passengers to prayer and meditation. Shaik Ibrahim was the name of the humble ecclesiastic who presided over this unassuming establishment;—a man truly excellent. Unfeigned piety had acquired for him extensive reputation, and his advice and opinion were frequently solicited by persons of all grades. His precepts of morality were illustrated by his practice, and albeit poor, that poverty proceeded entirely from his despising worldly wealth; valuable presents, though often offered he would seldom receive, and if he did, he always again bestowed them where they were better applied. A little rice, butter, water, sugar, and tobacco, constituted the sum total of Ibrahim's luxuries. Yet had this devotee more authority over the sons of Islamism, in Ougien, and its neighbourhood, than the most opulent of his sacerdotal brethren; his great wisdom, benevolence, philanthropy, and general blamelessness of life had even gained respect from the learned Brahmins and inferior Hindoos—of which classes there was a large proportion in that most ancient city.

In person, the Shaik was tall, spare, yet upright; his bushy beard and mustachios were partly white, and he wore his beard after a certain pointed manner, to designate himself as one that had performed a pilgrimage to the Caaba. Such was Ibrahim, whose wisdom was courted by the poor and great, and which gained him respect even from Selim, who had never seen him. He was now seated on a small mound of carefully smoothed clay, which was raised around the trunk of the banian tree, and near him reclined another personage whose steed, a strong one of that breed, from the northern provinces of the empire, was secured to the bared roots which entwined themselves fantastically around the parent stem. This companion of Ibrahim appeared by his plain and partially soiled dress, scarcely to belong to any class above the menial or certainly not at most to one above that of a petty bunian or tradesman, though a

green turban declared him one of the innumerable descendants of the prophet. He was listening attentively to the Shaik, who continued speaking as follows :

"To extend the truths of our holy religion, all means must be lawful because they are but extending the rights of God. Princes who exemplify this precept, merit the admiration and allegiance of every true believer ; but they who cherish not the faithful, nor promulgate to the utmost of their power the doctrines of Mahommed, should meet no encouragement from the sons of Islamism, as they receive none from Allah. Behold the fate of those princes who have disbelieved our tenets, have opposed them, or been even lukewarm in our cause !—the finger of heaven sternly points them out as monuments of its indignation."

"But," replied the stranger, "it has been firmly maintained by many very learned doctors, that it is essentially wicked to do evil in order to obtain good."

"Man's wisdom," said the priest, "is often ignorance and folly in the eyes of God ; such a precept is in itself an absurdity. Good and evil are as different in their nature as truth and falsehood, and to say that truth can by any means proceed from what is in itself false, is surely a self-evident folly."

"Nay," answered his companion, "you have now indeed uttered what seems to me a strange paradox. You assert, good cannot come out of evil, nor evil proceed from what is good. Supposing now, I, without any provocation, slay a person, who may himself be guilty of many murders, am I not in doing this, guilty of a great crime ? and do I not at the same time confer a boon on society, by ridding it of such a monster ?—Do I not, in short, bring good out of evil ?"

"Certainly not," replied Ibrahim. "The case you adduce must be regarded in a double light, the action as it affects yourself is unquestionably immoral ; and it does not necessarily follow that a good accrues to the community, because, though there may be a probability, there

is no certainty that there would be a recurrence of crime."

"Let us however return from this somewhat speculative subject to the one we were formerly engaged on—namely, the duty of kings to exert themselves in extending our faith. I would ask if any monarch, solicitous about future reputation, would act the part of the Emperor Jehangire?—He used to scoff at all religion. I remember the blessed Osman describing some of his impious atheistical recreations. It was a source of great pleasure to him to get a Brahmin, a Christian, and a Mussulman to dispute upon their respective creeds, and whichever of the three chanced to have the last word, was invariably awarded with his highness' approbation.

"Such recklessness respecting matters of all serious import was, I must say, setting a poor example to his subjects; but let not the unbeliever, however exalted in station, rely too much on self-assurance! What says the prophet in his chapter entitled "The Kneeling?"—"Wo unto every lying and impious person, who heareth the signs of God which are read unto him, and afterwards proudly persisteth in infidelity, as though he heard them not: (denounce unto him a painful punishment,) and who, when he cometh to the knowledge of any of our signs, receiveth the same with scorn. For these is prepared a shameful punishment; before them lieth Hell."—Such are the scriptural curses against unbelievers like Jehangire, and I grieve to say your father is little better. Heaven has thought fit to visit his want of faith with signal punishment in this life, and my sole joy is now to think that you have profited by the melancholy example; that you are one of our sincerest friends, and a staunch advocate of the rights of Omnipotence, and his blessed emissary."

This address of Ibrahim's must at once explain who this homely seeming companion in reality was: he was no less a personage than that crafty, talented, ambiguous, unfathomable Prince—Aurangzebe. To analyze gene-

rally his character is no easy task ; to particularize it is now impossible. He has by some been as much over-rated, as his worth has been by others detracted from ; praises and obloquy have been often erroneously applied. We will not here pause to enumerate any of the crimes, the deceits, mean hypocrisies and chivalrous achievements by which he gradually brought within his clutch the diadem of the house of Timour ; they having no connexion with this period, it will be sufficient if we repeat a former observation, that like most of the sons of Asiatic despots, he was in some degree necessitated to ascend the throne unfettered, unendangered by the existence of any rival,—or perish by that rival's hands.

An Indian monarch has rarely any near relative alive. It is almost certain that esteeming it at first impracticable to dispossess his eldest brother, and father's favourite Dara of the throne, Aurungzebe assumed that rigid adherence to Islamism, plainness of appearance, and almost monastic severity (which he retained till death) in order to ensure his own safety by not exciting the jealousy of the then more powerful branches of his family. Such a line of conduct guarantees his consummate prudence and sagacity ; for that the loftiest ambition smouldered beneath this sanctified self-denying garb, future events, which he ever skilfully wrested to his own aggrandizement, fully corroborates : and if we but except the means by which he gained the crown, there never reigned a king more able, useful, or discriminating. Despising utterly all the gaud and bauble of royalty, his sole study was to make himself acquainted with the state of the empire, in order to render his subjects happy, and for this purpose he personally investigated all the minutiae of administration. Unassailable himself to flattery or venality, he lost no opportunity of detecting and punishing them in others, and his natural cunning and boldness in seeking for information by every means, and even by assuming disguises, such as we now see him in, made

him acquainted with many petty oppressions and delinquencies, to the utter amazement of the convicted.

We will not, however, anticipate farther the Prince's character, but permit the conversation, which we have thus interrupted, to proceed.

"Ibrahim," replied the monarch, "that the first duty incumbent on every government is to honour Almighty God, I cordially coincide in; but though I myself, as you know, am a firm believer in our prophet, I am nevertheless so far a sceptic, so far a latitudinarian, as to think that the most acceptable means of serving him is not to stickle or persecute on matters of religious opinion—not to oppress the blind pagan worshippers of Brahma, the infidel sects of Christianity, or any of the numberless other opinionative classes,—but to do good collectively to humanity. To make mankind as happy as they can be from the nature and constitution of society,—and this, Ibrahim, can only be effected by enforcing those general moral precepts which are the foundations of each and every religion."

"Sire," replied the Mollah, "you now discourse as a philosopher and a politician; were I to make an answer I should naturally do so as an ecclesiastic, and obtrude on you the duty imposed on us by our holy teacher, of disseminating his doctrines by whatever means. . . . Since however you intend honouring me with your confidence on temporal concerns, I propose we forthwith relinquish entirely the subject of religion, and devote ourselves to the consideration of whatever matters you may at present have chiefly at heart."

"Spoken like a wise man," answered Aurungzebe, "and so in the first place, let us hear what you have been able to decide on the character of our neighbouring representative, Selim of Ougien. You know the reports I have heard concerning him; are they true?"

"With respect to his brother," responded the Shaik, "all my inquiries have been unavailing. How even he

died, or where, no one seems to know ; but certain it is that Selim retains possession of his property."

"And of his nephew's person?" demanded the King.

"That the nephew," continued Ibrahim, "is in the castle I easily discovered; but whether again as a prisoner or voluntary guest I could by no means ascertain; to me indeed there appears to be some mystery concerning Omar, which the more we endeavour to penetrate, appears the more mysterious. I never was in the Nabob's palace, and have never yet seen him, nor do I believe even many of the domestics have more intimate knowledge of him or his pursuits; whether it be that they think him but a poor dependant unworthy of consideration, I cannot tell."

"Most likely," answered the Prince. "He will meet with nothing but neglect and cold contemptuousness,—the effects of his uncle's cruelty and injustice; but touching the last instructions which I sent you, have you made any discovery?"

"None," replied Ibrahim; "and with all deference to your highness's shrewdness and excellent espionage, I am firmly of opinion that any apprehensions of a conspiracy against your power and person, so far at least as Selim's family is concerned, is unfounded."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Aurungzebe, smiling, "then let me now show you how indispensable it is for one in my exalted situation to have his eyes fixed on all: friends as much as enemies, to be continually suspicious of security; "and so saying he drew from within the folds of his turban a small neatly written scroll, and read as follows:—

"TO THE EMPEROR OF THE WORLD, &c. &c."

"This will acquaint the royal understanding that the conspiracy formed by the numerous debauched band of fakiers, headed by that old and proficient sorceress Bestamia, widow of the late Hassen, brother of the Rajah of Ougien is no fabrication, nor idle report. For the truth

of this and the formerly transmitted statement, the undersigned slave of the Emperor will answer with his life."

Signed, **RAMJOHNNY.**

"This, Ibrahim, is from an emissary, who feigns himself one of the most zealous in the conspiracy; and if necessary I could produce two more despatches from spies, who, under the same circumstances enter unsuspectingly into the closest secrets of the traitors. What think you now? These are religionists of the first water! great, certainly, is the favour princes ought to show those who profess an entire and unremitting devotedness to sanctity!"

"Did I suppose," replied the Shaik, "you intended anything against religion or its teachers by the sarcasm which you have just uttered, I should answer less moderately; but as we agreed dropping all such topics, I shall observe, that the secrecy of this conspiracy is only equalled by its folly. Have you, O king, so poor an estimation of the true followers of the son of Abdallah, as to think that if a rabble of infuriated dissipated zealots seek thy ruin and universal anarchy—the pious at heart will not loudly reprobate their crimes?—yes, and rally for the preservation of virtue, and you whom they regard as its protector? Such, my liege, will happen, even should this novel monster unstrangled in its birth, be permitted to take wing. But still I hesitate to say, that this involves the governor."

"That," said the King, "I cannot yet prove, although my suspicions are tantamount to conviction.—Is not that hag Bestamia, who, by her wealth, witchcraft, and treasons, presumptuously holds our magistrates in defiance, the mother of Selim's nephew?—Is it therefore likely these important and dangerous matters would be agitated without their knowledge?—No, 'tis hardly credible! and if the Nabob is aware of such a conspiracy, as he must

be, what renders him thus silent, but self-implication ? 'tis plain, Ibrahim."

"Sire," answered the priest, "I wave all doubts before your superior knowledge in the ways of this deceitful world ; but from the trouble I have unavailingly taken, in order to discover anything of the kind, I cannot refrain from moralizing on the inscrutability of the heart of man."

"Moralize on, friend Ibrahim," replied Aurungzebe. "You will however too often find the heart illegible. Like the mole it worketh out of observance ; and but for the occasional irruptions it exhibits, all were indeed dark and inaccessible ; it is by carefully perusing what can be seen we penetrate into what is concealed. One word will often declare thoughts and intentions which volumes could not express ;—the ripple of a becalmed ocean will hint to a scrutinizing eye the might of its troubled billows. You must now, however, be doubly vigilant over our enemies ; let not one of their motions pass unobserved. We must permit their malignant plots to ripen fully ; I love to seize the traitor with the very dagger in his hand, when his actions admit of no equivocation—no misinterpretation !—but who is he that winds so carefully his way along the opposite banks ?"

"'Tis old Ajimut," replied the Shaik, "as excellent a man as breathes ; his house is in that grove almost wholly hidden by the trees, and there has he passed an inoffensive, unmolested life. There is not a more virtuous proselyte of our faith than Ajimut."

"'Tis a sweet isolated spot," said the monarch, who had remained for some time musing on the scene. "It is indeed a lovely spot—were I less or other than I am, Ibrahim, methinks I could there embower myself for ever ;—disburden myself of power, ambition, grandeur, worldliness ; and plod seriously after wisdom. Power—ambition—grandeur—what are ye !—when the race is run, and the goal appointed for the fleet as for the tardy gained !—death—death—he who can ponder on that

word—death,—and feel proud in his power—his grandeur—his riches—his everything, must, Ibrahim, be made of piteous stuff, and signally unworthy of them. I am exalted—rich—a task-master to kings; have everything earth affords at my command, but I assure you, my friend, I never see a sepulchre without grovelling in my own estimation into a vile equivalence with the grub, which imagination pictures battenning within!—I remember princes and peasants are but of clay, and that even in this we are inferior perhaps to some of earth's richest moulds. Did all great ones, Ibrahim, thus sometimes moralize, virtue would then have an even chance with vice in directing their steps;—to say no more," resumed Aurungzebe, changing his voice, manner, and subject rapidly,—“said you not, however, that Ajimut had lived there long and unmolested?”

“Yes, Sire, ever since I remember; which is nearly twenty years.”

“To live so long near Selim unharmed, proclaims his poverty,” replied the King.

“By no means,” said Ibrahim; “Ajimut is reputed rich, but his unaffected meekness and inoffensive manner may be the cause of his never having fallen under the Rajah's displeasure.”

“These are I fear,” answered Aurungzebe, “reasons hardly weighty enough to account for such uncommon generosity on his part;—has he any family?”

“A son and daughter,” responded the Shaik, “as fine children as ever gladdened parent's eye; the boy is of a noble, generous nature, and my peculiar favourite;—I never see him without thinking that had heaven permitted, I might have been blessed with one, who in his infant years was equally beautiful and intelligent—but alas! 'twas destined otherwise.”—Ibrahim was here much affected.

“I was ignorant till now,” said the monarch, interrupting him less feelingly than he perhaps intended, “that you had been a father.”

"Yes, Sire, I was once a father. Near this spot, where lies entombed the sainted Osman, stood my cottage;—though lowly, it was rendered cheerful and inestimable by a beloved wife and darling child. Allah first assayed my justness by bereaving me of my excellent partner;—but this shock I stood without murmuring: even in the paroxysms of my grief and wildest moments of sickening desolation I pressed my boy to my breast, and lifting my thoughts to God, felt consolation—comfort. But I was doomed soon to undergo a more poignant chastening; to grovel under a sorrow which prostrated at once every glimmering hope of future happiness—my son disappeared—he who was dearer to me than the whole world—than breath—than everything, save salvation."

"When did this severe trial befall you?" demanded Aurungzebe.

"Exactly fourteen years ago," replied Ibrahim. "He was then about five years old, and whether he was carried off by the river, which I think too probable, as it was during the rains, or whether he was devoured by an alligator, or perished by some other accident, I never could discover. His remains were never found.—Poor innocent! how often in my slumbers have I seen thee hurrying along down the black curling currents, imploring with cries and tears a father's succour, whilst I, stretching forth my covetous hands to snatch thee from destruction, awake breathless with anxiety and exertion, to find 'twas but a vision."

"It is indeed," said Aurungzebe tenderly, "a melancholy circumstance to remember; but strive, my friend, to wean such dismal reminiscences from thy heart; the lofty spirit of man should be stubbornly magnanimous in affliction; it should endeavour to surmount sorrow by seeking assistance in religion and philosophy—as the eagle leaves the weeping lugubrious clouds which envelope this wo-laden world, and soars into the benign unfettered brightness of heaven."

"I am now," replied Ibrahim, "in a great degree weaned from everything appertaining to earth, but believe me, Sire, nor memory nor conscience can be stilled by philosophy. It is easy to preach stoicism, but hard to practise it. You see this sorry piece of yellow rag;—it belonged—it was my poor boy's—and is the only thing left me appertaining to him; often have I found myself unconsciously gazing on it, and when my eyes were bedimmed, I have wiped with it my tears, till at last, ashamed of such weakness, I have thrown it away, and flown to the koran, as much for the means of diverting harrowing reflection, as for seeking consolation. He who loses his worldly all, may by industry acquire fresh wealth,—but who, O who can re-kindle the changeless features of a wife, a son, a brother, or a friend?—you feel as if your tenure of life were gotten at too high a price; that you have no right to linger so tenaciously in the unenlivening light of day. You feel yourself no longer a social being. What can prove more acceptable to such a sterile outcast from the accustomed cares, feelings, and occupations of human nature, one whom happiness diligently eschews, than that noiseless unharassed cell, the grave?"

"I see," replied Aurungzebe, "I have inadvertently jarred a chord which I wish I had left untouched. You will pardon the sufferings I have inflicted from my previous ignorance of the cause. To one so holy, learned, and wise, it were presumption in me to recommend those means of alleviation, of which you are a much profounder adept. But—see, if my eyes tell me not falsely, he whom you mistook for the worthy proprietor of yonder cottage is an individual I have seen before. Aye! to be sure, 'tis no less an useful person than Ramjohnny, whose epistle I just now read."

The said Ramjohnny accordingly drew near, and after innumerable genuflections and prostrations, stood intent to catch what the Emperor might say, but

just at such an extreme distance as rendered it difficult so to do.

"Well, knave," said Aurungzebe, "what has brought thee hither—and how, Sir, found you where to seek for us?"

"Can the sun shine without his refulgence detecting him?" answered Ramjohnny with a self-complacent smile—"or the lion go forth to the desert without being recognized by the poor parasite jackal?—This however," continued he, with more resoluteness of voice and manner, "will be the slave's excuse, and voucher for his zeal."—And after indulging in a score more obeisances, he presented the Emperor with a packet carefully sealed, and secured with a cord of red silk. This he instantly commenced opening, and whilst doing said,—“Depart—according to the value of the communication shalt thou be rewarded.”—No sooner was this mandate given, than the obsequient Ramjohnny recommenced a new train of civil motions, and having retired upwards of three hundred yards without turning his face from the King, he dropped further ceremonials, and withdrew.

Aurungzebe's keen eye glanced eagerly over the contents, and the further he advanced, the blacker lowered his countenance; at last, throwing down the paper, he burst into a bitter exclamation: "Repine not thou again," said he, "Shaik Ibrahim, for being childless.—Let what you now see of a parent's misery, prove a lasting emulsion to thy sorrow.—Can it be! can it be, Ibrahim, that my beloved son who once refused to rob me of my sceptre, is now a traitor and in arms?"

"Nothing," replied the Shaik, "but ocular proof, could make me believe such recklessness, and fatuity."

"It requires no such corroboration on my part," replied the monarch, again cursorily looking over the paper, "here is a document in Mahommed's own hand, which though bearing neither signature nor address, I know too well to be mistaken.—It states that by this

time he will have joined his rebel brother Suja, and requests pecuniary supplies, which might be raised from the wealthy shroffs of Ougien.—Yes, yes, intended evidently for my false subtle governor ; this shall however soon be sifted.”

“ I am not more amazed,” said Ibrahim, “ than I am grieved, that the Prince should entertain such desperate and hopeless designs.”

“ Hopeless, you may indeed designate them,” responded Aurungzebe, “ any danger arising from such rebellions could never distract my peace of mind. It is the disappointment, the bitter disappointment at finding, he, whom I believed my best and noblest son, a traitor, which now affects me. The Emperor now sounded a small silver bugle which hung at his side, and instantly a band of twenty well-armed horsemen who were concealed in a distant wood came forth. He then threw himself lightly into his saddle, and followed by the escort, his nimble courser bounded off at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER IV.

"The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:
 Now spurs the lated traveller apace,
 To gain the timely inn; and near approaches
 The subject of our watch."

SHAKESPEARE.

As it is the undoubted prerogative of story-tellers and scandal-mongers to recount everything after their own way, we shall not apologize for rambling to some other individuals which it is necessary to introduce.

About half way betwixt Agra and Ougien, (which are four hundred and forty miles apart,) there is a wide dusty plain with few intermissions of fruitlessness, over which stretches a sandy and almost trackless road. There is not one tree or beautifying object to be seen for miles, and the sun seems to glare with a spiteful and supernatural ardour on the unproductive glebe. In this inhospitable region, and on a most sultry day were seated two persons of very different appearance. One was Ramjohnny, whom we have previously mentioned, the other a religious mendicant or fakier. The latter was a tall, robust man, and almost naked. His long black hair, surmounted by a dirty ragged turban, painted yellow, hung down to his shoulders, and his face displayed as many different colours as an artist's pallet.—These had originally been disposed in distinct lines and patches, but the dust and perspiration had played sad havoc with their regularity, combining the several tints in one incongruous deformity. He was otherwise begrimed with a whitish dust or meal, which gave him a very hideous death-like

appearance. In his hand he brandished a crooked staff such as fakiers are frequently used to carry. Ramjohnny was garbed more as a peasant than a soldier, but he was armed with a sword, matchlock, and all proper appurtenances. These two were seated on perchance the most numerous collection of blades of grass in a circuit of ten good miles; and yet was it a piece of turf which would have gone little further than to cover a respectable grave.

The reason of so uncommon an abundance of verdure there, was a small muddy well, which somehow or other, managed charitably enough to support the fore-mentioned sward, and moreover to afford protracted starvation to one stunted, ungainly tree, of the palm kind, and which seemed the special eremite of its cast. This like all other sour recluses had retired from society to little purpose, as it gave no more shadow than a flag staff. Of all the good earth's disk, never was there a spot apparently less appropriate for mirth or jovialty than this; one would as soon have looked for ink in a sand sprinkler; yet Bacchus, be it remembered, went to India as a cadet, and in his revels there, may have trodden this very region, drouthy as it is, and willed his influence on all future visitors. Be this as it may, he of the painted physiognomy was singing with a fury which might well have passed for frenzy, had not a gourd bottle of immense dimensions that stood near, explained the cause of his excitement. This jovial sort of friar, had a curious comical sort of countenance, of which a very black overgrown matted beard, formed the apex. His eyes had a strange sinister expression, and were amazingly versatile, for they could assume a sudden hypocritical sedateness, and as instantly twinkle with a humorous roguishness. The fertility of his cheeks was proved by their exuberant crop of whiskers, which, like vetches, twisted and entwined in all directions. Nor was his upper lip a whit less productive, for twin mustachios protruded themselves to so great a distance, as to

bear no more unequal proportion to his face, than a snail's horns to the accompanying development of the creature. Whilst roaring out his song, he used every exertion to enhance its points of humour by grotesque gestures and grimaces, and his features were occasionally twisted into a cast of greater ugliness than it were easy to conceive mortality capable of assuming. But much of this hideousness was extraneous, being caused by his uneuphonical contortions, and the misapplied pigments, which being thus forcibly wrinkled together, rendered him inimitably disgusting, besides altering entirely the real cast of his features.

"Admirably performed!" exclaimed Ramjohnny, who had been for some time loudly laughing; "by my word, you godly men excel in everything you attempt."

"More especially in patience and long-suffering," responded the fakier; "what a place is this to remain in as we have done for twelve sterling hours and upwards.—My eyes are weak, blinking weak, from the glare of that abominable sand, of which there is enough to replenish for ever Time's ever running glass. We idiots know not the intrinsic value of Time—twelve hours in this sand bath!—and when we are so fresh from Ougien, where King Bicker Majit, of glorious memory was the first in Malava to raise a temple for Macal's* worship!—'tis grossly thoughtless."

"You speak learnedly enough," answered his companion, "yet are we not to blame, seeing we have no choice, but must follow implicitly our instructions. There exists no doubt, or at least very little, that any one in his senses would take no other road than this; if not for his own sake, for his horse's, there being not a spoonful of water to be met with for miles on either side this well."

"We will wait till sun-set, Ramjohnny," replied the fakier, "and then quit this place, which is sufficient to

* Time.

kill one with thirst." Here he indulged himself with sundry gulps from the gourd, and the other followed his example. "May I be made incurably purblind by this cursed day's sojourn," said the fakier, wiping his lips and mustachios, "if I see not something progressing in the distance: just look steadily betwixt my poney Rustum's fore feet—and plague upon the skittish brute, he has moved!—look now a little to the right of his off leg—as I live, he has shuffled into the way again, a pest upon him!—However, you cannot now fail clearly to see some travellers approaching. 'Tis just there."

Ramjohnny, spite of Rustum's interference, who, in conjunction with another four-footed friend, fastened to the fore-mentioned palm-tree, was strenuously battling against the cannibal mosquitoes, now saw distinctly two horsemen advancing towards them, and half an hour's riding across the arid plain brought them to the well.

"Ram, Ram," cried the fakier, (a salutation common amongst travellers and pilgrims,) moulding at the same time his parti-coloured face into a gravity that would have honoured Confucius, or Zeroaster, or Gontam.

"Ram, Ram," responded cheerfully both the others, one of whom was Alraschid.

"Baba," said the mendicant, to whom we shall henceforth append his proper name of Buccas,—“the sun is this day sufficiently severe to dry up the very blood in our veins, but God's beneficence be lauded, you will find here delightful water. Drink, my sons, and refresh your exhausted limbs.” Having arrogated to himself this direction and charitable feeling so accordant with pater-nity, he stroked complacently his whiskers, and seemed wrapt in a devotional reverie. The travellers having made a civil return, now dismounted, and having watered their nags, fastened them to a root of the tree near the others. After this they sat down near the fakier in a very friendly manner.

"From the completeness of your arms, young men," said Ramjohnny in his politest manner, "it would seem

you esteem these tracts as dangerous as barren. I hope there is no cause of apprehension. Have you heard of any robberies or murders, any dechoity work, eh?"

"No," replied Alraschid, "but there is nothing like being prudently prepared for whatever may occur."

"Right," cried Buccas, "but were you to carry as few valuables about you as I do, and esteem life as lightly, all such precautions would be despised."

Here, however, the conversation was cut short by a storm, which, unperceived by any of the party, had gradually been gathering. The rebellious Rustum was ever the origin of all evil; for besides the uncommon craftiness of his disposition, he was quite hide bound with viciousness. He was a sturdy Roman-nosed cob, of that reddish mottled colour, still extant in ancient dimities, saving his mane, and muzzle, and tail, all of which were naturally milk white—we say naturally, because Buccas had been as profuse in red lead and yellow ochre towards his quadruped as to himself, and quite as judicious in their application; the bushy and lower part of his tail was of a bright vermilion, and his sides were covered with patches of yellow, which, with other improvements, rendered him very unlike himself. This subtle beast having broken his tether, advanced with complete benignity of demeanour towards one of the newly arrived steeds, which was unsuspectingly discussing his gram;* but when within point blank hoof distance, he executed a rapid demi-volute, and bestowed at the same time such a salute on his astonished visitor's ribs, as took away all breath for retaliation, besides making him drop a mouthful of his dinner. Bitter, however, was his enemy's revenge; he, also, performed skilfully a demi-volute, and seizing Rustum's ears with his big yellow teeth, had unquestionably added yet another item to his beauty, by making him a crop, but for the other hitherto neutral, but now all important, power. This was Ulluiddien's (the

* Sort of vetch.

companion of Alraschid,) great heavy charger, who, from mere martial motives joined in the disturbance with a joyous alacrity not to be conceived. After four ineffective and furious kicks, he succeeded by the fifth, in rendering Rustum dizzy, and now had his aggrieved and mortal enemy literally chewed off his ears, but for their respective masters' hasty interference. By dint of considerable cursing and cudgelling, however, the combatants were separated, and order restored.

"By the estimation of my beard!" exclaimed the fakier, stroking it affectionately and casting down his eyes with suppressed pleasure on its luxuriant locks, "seldom have I seen so serious a bobbery!—but"—continued he, partly to himself, as well as if apostrophising Rustum, "I hope you will have enough to do presently, without thus jading yourself, scuffling rascal!"—Hardly five minutes elapsed after this hubbub, before Buccas, having snatched up his big stick, which he had concealed in the sand till a fit opportunity offered, jumped up, and bestowed such a blow on our hero's comrade, as laid him senseless. Meanwhile, Ramjohnny, who only waited for this signal, rushed upon Alraschid, and secured him. So unlooked for was this assault, that neither of the vanquished had time to draw their weapons, and before they could gather together their senses, the fakier had bound his opponent's arms behind his back with his own turban, and was ready to assist his coadjutor, should Alraschid have proved obstreperous, both being fairly captured. Buccas, after squirting from his cheek a quantity of saliva, which from the mastication of betel, resembled red ink, said: "Yes, yes, there ye sit as dumb-founded as two netted widgeons, and may suicide be my death, if we deserve not sweetmeats for managing the thing so dexterously.—Ye young traffickers in treason," continued he, casting his dark glaring eye alternately on either prisoner, "deliver up without more trouble the packet intended for Selim of Ougien."

"Force or denial," answered Alraschid proudly, "are

alike useless or impossible. It is your lawless power to rob us of what we are entrusted with, but it shall never be a voluntary action on my part to give it up. I would have you however reflect on the consequences of attacking a messenger of the Imperial Prince Mahomed."

"Pooh, pooh!" replied the fakier; "leave consequences to philosophers and the fore-sighted—we are neither one or other—we live for the day, and act by impulse, and for those who can direct it. So by your leave, fair-faced young man, I will commence my scrutiny." Accordingly, having taken off and untwisted Alraschid's turban, the desired missive tumbled on the ground. "All right," exclaimed Buccas, examining narrowly the seals—"and now, my young friends, you must make up your minds to be fastened to this tree for exactly two hours, and like elephants, by the leg." If remonstrance was in vain, so even a certain civility and readiness of deportment was prudential, for the fakier could with a couple of strokes of his huge heavy stick have saved himself all such precautionary trouble. They, therefore, without moan or imprecation, allowed themselves to be dragged to the palm tree, and Ramjohnny, having produced a strong cord in his most officiously polite manner, Buccas commenced instantly the operation—having bound their legs securely to the tree, and in such a manner as rendered it impossible to rise from a sitting posture. He then took the turban which he had previously used, and fastened three of their arms firmly together, leaving only Alraschid's right one at liberty. The reason of this will be explained by his next proceeding. He then bored a hole into the bark as high as he could reach, into which he stuck a small peg, and having tied to either end of a piece of cord a knife and the now empty calabash, he suspended it over the peg. The calabash being filled with water, a stone was necessary to be attached to the other end, in order to make the knife counterbalance the water.—Being thus fairly suspended

beyond the capture's reach, he then opened with his knife a deep crack in the vessel, which had been secured with putty or plaster, and the water oozed out in large regular drops.—“A couple of hours,” said he, saddling his beast, “will bring the knife within reach, when you can liberate your legs—by that time your despatches will be in better hands. Heaven bless you, my sons,—another time, when you have anything subtle to perform, keep both your eyes well open—the fox, you see, may be caught by his own tail—and though I swear by moon and planet, I regret the disagreeableness of your position, ceremony, and comfort, must yield to security.” So saying, he mounted his mauled hack, and, followed by Ram-johnny, set off across the plain at a pace which Rustum neither expected nor admired.

Soon as these foot-pads were out of hearing, the prisoners gave loud vent to their feelings, which however differed considerably. Ulluddeen, who was a hurkaru or messenger of the Aggur Rajah, and in no way interested in the business for which he had most severely suffered, indulged for nearly a quarter of an hour in the most unlimited abuse against the robbers—after which he diverged to a dreadful episode of self-condemnation for having been so unsuspicious of their character.

Alraschid, on the other hand appeared to give little thought to his hardships, but bitterly bemoaned the loss of a packet which his master had told him was of value,—“The first confidential employment!” thought he—“and to be despoiled!” shame, and indignation, and grief at this, plunged him into a medley of misery, from which he was only relieved by surmising who the robbers could be, they being quite aware of what he carried, and seeking no other plunder. After nearly three hours of these nauseating reflections, down came the knife and stone, and Alraschid soon severed the bonds which by this time severely galled them. The page was now not a little perplexed what to do, and he entered into a con-

sultation with his companion, whether he should retrace his steps to Agra, or proceed to Ougien.

Ulluddeen, who was a lively decided young fellow, reprobated the notion of returning. "What will you gain by it?" demanded he. "The prince will in all probability abuse and despise you,—nay, perchance, send you about your business. In which case I take it, you will have to retrace all this long inhospitable road, and most likely without so pleasant a companion."

"I do think my master would never again see me!" said Alraschid in a dejected manner.

"Never mind," continued Ulluddeen, "as you are thus far on the road home, at all events finish your journey. I go with you nearly the whole way, and should you choose to put up with the very humble accommodation which I can offer to one of your rank, it is heartily at your service.

"Thanks for the offer," replied Alraschid, "but I will put off no time,—and Shaik Ibrahim, the best friend I have in the world, after my parents, will advise me how I ought to act in this emergency."

Nothing memorable occurred during the remainder of their journey together, (which lasted three days) when they parted with mutual regret; for although the acquaintance was short, and formed on the road, it had charms from the similarity of thought and the disposition of the parties which one of much longer endurance might not have afforded. A day's riding brought Alraschid from Aggur to Ougien, and though his heart beat high as he viewed the streams which laved his father's garden, and even descried in the distant haze the dim outline of the wood which surrounded his cottage—so distressed felt he at the issue of his mission, that he for awhile banished all thoughts of home and the dear friends to which he was so near, and turned off from the path which conducted to their abode, in order to seek father Ibrahim. He found the Shaik seated at the foot of his burgôt tree, on a small clay seat which he had constructed around it, smoking.

His astonishment on recognising his young friend was greater than he usually allowed himself to exhibit, and after bestowing upon him a blessing, inquired what had brought him from Agra. The page told this in as few words as possible, and concluded by asking what he ought to do.

Ibrahim having patiently listened to his story, could not repress a smile. "Make yourself easy, my son," said he, "as to the fate of your packet, for I myself saw it remitted to the Emperor. And as for returning to your master; it would be arduous, as he is now with his brother Suja in direct rebellion against his father. Fortunate is it for you, that you are clear of all such troubles. But how came you to be entrusted with the Prince's secrets?—You were of course acquainted with the contents of his despatches—your intimacy with him being so notorious?"

"I assure you," replied Alraschid, "that although much trusted by his highness, I am perfectly ignorant of the nature of his despatches,—and nothing has more surprised me than your present intelligence."

"I never yet knew you to tell a falsehood," returned the Shaik in a severe voice.—"And do you repeat that you are wholly ignorant what was contained in the packet you were robbed of?"

"As I live, and as I love you," said the page, "I solemnly swear I am altogether ignorant."

"Enough," replied Ibrahim, "go and be happy with your friends.—Let your mind be at peace, and forget both Mahommed and Selim."

However unsatisfactory this advice might be, Alraschid knew from experience it was useless in any way to interfere either with his pastor's pleasure or manner. He therefore left him to the enjoyment of his pipe, and with a lighter heart and quicker pace proceeded homewards.

CHAPTER V.

“Come hither boy; if ever thou shalt love,
 In the sweet pangs of it, remember me;
 For such as I am, all true lovers are,
 Unstaid and skittish in all motions else,
 Save in the constant image of the creature
 That is beloved.—”

TWELFTH-NIGHT.

SELIM's palace, or rather place of strength, was a large irregular pile, built of grey stone, without any apparent regularity or design. It extended some hundred yards along the river, close to which was the zenana, or women's apartments, which were as usual surrounded by a high wall, though this was lower towards the stream than elsewhere, forming a noble terrace, intended for enjoying the agreeable coolness of evening. The building had a flat stucco roof, begirt with projecting balconies,—studded with small turrets, and the walls were perforated with innumerable little windows, no respect having been paid to the regularity of their disposal. The scenery around it was beautiful, though restricted, and the view from the terrace must have been particularly pleasing, for the lofty opposite banks were clad with different kinds of trees, and even shrubs, when otherwise too precipitous, sheltering various birds of gaudy feather, amongst which, numerous wild pea-fowl might be seen in all the splendour of their plumage. And when the rising moon had hushed more ignoble songsters, the love-lorn bulbul was no stranger; warbling his thrilling serenade amongst roses, and a thousand other flowers, realizing all poetic fiction. To the right the river expanded itself into a little lake, the effect of which was increased by a gentle winding which hid it for a

considerable distance from the view; but on the other side, being pent in by the approaching banks, it fretted, foamed, and boiled for awhile, till another abrupt turn closed the prospect. It was on the terrace which commanded so delightfully diversified a scene, that the noble's daughter was accustomed to linger in contemplation of its beauties, when every eye in her father's castle was closed in sleep,—but there was yet another attraction to the spot. To unfold this, we must allow three long years of our hero's existence to have been immured in the abyss of time, and the reader's imagination.

All old castles have, like some of the planets, their satellites—indeed, what crumbling or lonely looking one is there without its concomitant ghost or goblin? This observation applies to the mansion we have so hastily sketched;—and there was a superstitious belief regarding it, which, whether it first originated from its secluded situation and gloomy appearance, or from the terrors of the credulous alone, cannot now be determined. At all events, it was universally accredited by the neighbouring villagers, and even by the citizens of Ougien, that their governor's castle was haunted by unholy and unearthly spirits. This report had the effect of making it still more lonely, and there was no one, who, when the night had fairly commenced her reign, would voluntarily have trusted himself amongst the impervious groves which girt this mysterious mansion; during the lightsomeness of day, it was even universally shunned.

Alraschid had been brought up, his mind impressed with all those superstitions in which India abounds; and although few of his age could be prompter in meeting any common danger, yet did he feel ever an unaccountable repugnance to threading the dark woods, which immediately enveloped a building to which few, save the Rajah's retainers, durst at any time approach.

One day having rambled much further along the stream than he had ever previously done, he at length to his surprise found himself exactly fronting the castle,

and however indistinct the glimpses he had obtained of it from other points, it here presented itself fully and without any obstruction. In fact, nothing but the Sipra, which was here deep and rapid, intervened. He remained for some time gazing with awe and wonder on that extensive mass of building, which was so intimately blended with many of those tales and legends that had left the liveliest impressions on his youthful imagination, until his attention was diverted by a parroquet which darted noisily from a hollow in one of the trees that hung over the precipice which confined the river. He observed that the bird was of a particular and highly esteemed species, having red feathers on the head and wings; and remembering how his sister had long requested him to obtain for her such a pet, he ascended the tree for the purpose of plundering the nest. Whilst engaged in so perilous a situation, he perceived an elegant female form appear on the terrace of Selim's zenana, and a pair of houri's eyes peering stedfastly at him. He was struck with surprise; and neglecting his merciless occupation, continued riveted with admiration. The cause of this emotion, however, now withdrew, and Alraschid, without having accomplished his design, descended the tree, to the perfect satisfaction of the poor distracted bird, which fluttered around uttering piercing cries.

With hopes of again beholding the damsel, he tarried on the spot for nearly an hour, but she did not again show herself; and he retired home with a bosom burning with conflicting thought, and hitherto unknown desires.

To the no small perturbation of the parroquet, he next day insensibly repaired to the same spot, and whilst stretched pensively at the foot of the tree, which he had formerly climbed, he was again blessed with a sight of her, who from her garb and commanding mien he had justly supposed was the daughter of Selim.

She was attended by another female, who soon withdrew, leaving Noorun seated near the parapet of the ter-

race. Alraschid's heart beat tumultuously, and his eyes were fixed upon her as if she were the only object perceptible by vision;—could we imagine one vivid point of transpicuous brightness, in a wide impervious gloom, it would afford us a conception of the abstracted intensity of his gaze. The enraptured youth fancied that his idol regarded him with more than common curiosity, and he had now the presumption by signs, to venture a more intimate acquaintance; which, though the lady must have seen them, were received with no tokens of surprise, and none of disapprobation. She still retained her seat, apparently wrapt in contemplation. It struck Alraschid, that had the maid been really displeased with his behaviour, she would instantly have withdrawn, and the alarming thought followed, might have informed her father of his unpardonable freedom. This displeasing reflection, combined with the superstitious dread he entertained towards the frowning and forbidding battlements, checked momentarily his ardour; but another glance at their fair occupant, as quickly dispelled all real or imaginary fears.

“If such,” exclaimed he, “be the spirits which haunt this well shunned scene, be mine the risk, if mine the sole possession!” and obeying the impulse of youthful recklessness he plunged resolutely into the river, and swam for the opposite shore. Noorun, on seeing this action, started up, and looked wildly around, as if from anxiety, lest he should be espied by any other inmate of the castle; and in the mean time Alraschid had nearly reached the zenana wall, when to his mortification, he found what he had never anticipated, that to effect a landing was impossible; the banks being quite abrupt, and the current as impetuous as it was profound. He was accordingly compelled to allow himself to be carried further down, but not before having the satisfaction of beholding close above him the loveliest creature he had ever seen.

"Venturesome boy!" said she in a subdued and tremulous voice, "wherefore comest thou here?"

"To adore beauty," responded he, with a smile, and salam as gallant as the invidious current would admit of. Noorun looked pleased, but her satisfaction was evidently chilled by apprehension for the safety of her young acquaintance. His thoughts were, however, otherwise engaged than in contemplating any personal danger, and their eyes emanating very different sentiments were fixed upon each other, till an eddy formed by a small projection of the bank swept him rudely from her sight. Fatigued by this aquatic exertion, he lay on the grass to recruit his strength, when he saw approaching through a glade in the forest a man having a peasant's appearance, accompanied by a boy, who from his dress seemed of a much higher order. Fearing, as was most likely, they might be connected with the Rajah, Alraschid carefully concealed himself in a bed of water lilies. They drew near,—he heard their voices;—and he listened attentively to them until certain they had well passed by; he then lifted up carefully his head to reconnoitre—but there was no one there. His astonishment at this was quite inconceivable—they had vanished; but where were they gone? he could see distinctly around for upwards of two hundred yards, and there was nothing except the bolls of the trees, and the crumbling remnants of what looked like an old well, to intercept partially the view. He remained for some time musing on this inexplicable event without being able in the slightest degree to satisfy his curiosity, and this little mystery produced strange speculations in his mind as he travelled leisurely homewards. On his arrival there he formed innumerable surmises regarding her who was now mistress of his heart, and so many questions did he put to his parents, that they began to suspect he must have seen either the daughter or one of the slaves of Selim.

"Rash son!" said Ajimut, "have you madly dared

to break the respected bounds of our Omrah's privacy ? Little perhaps wilt thou afterwards care, if ruinous revenge be hurled from his hands against thy helpless parents ?”

Alraschid hesitated to reply ; should he confess the truth, it would but render his parents unhappy without being counterbalanced by any good. After a short pause, therefore, he, for the first time in his life, was guilty of falsehood. It was, however, a lover's lie, and when did real lovers not prove false to the whole world, save themselves ! He declared he had not trespassed on the bounds proscribed by society, and that curiosity alone was his motive for making so many inquiries.

“ Well then, brother,” said Rhada, “ if curiosity be your only reason, you need ask nothing more, for I understand Selim's daughter is extraordinarily beautiful—perhaps, however, you have some intentions of making her a proposal ! the only daughter of an Omrah, of five thousand men would certainly be no despicable match !” —and here the party burst into laughter at the quizzed stripling's expence. But he was not to be thus easily prevented from again attempting to speak with his mistress, and how to effect this, presented considerable perplexity. At length he hit upon a scheme. Pretending to take a great delight in fishing, he persuaded his indulgent father to permit the village carpenter to construct for him a small canoe ;—this canoe was nothing better than a large palm tree hollowed out neatly. Whilst this was in progress, Alraschid regularly, though secretly repaired to the still unrifled nest, and had repeatedly the pleasure of beholding, and making signals to his beloved ; more intimate communication was yet impossible, for heavy falls of rain had rendered the river so swollen and furious as to make another expedition across doubly hazardous. But when the boat was finished, he lost no time in learning to manage it, and in a day or two was expert enough to paddle about with perfect ease and safety.

One fine placid evening, when the sun had bestowed his parting blush on the surrounding groves, our hero managed, despite of the impetuosity of the stream to reach the Rajah's dwelling, and having stealthily skulked beneath the zenana wall, the balustrade of which cast a deep shadow on the stream, he dropped his anchor, which consisted in a stone attached to a piece of cord, and awaited in breathless expectation Noorun's appearance. No one, however came ;—fear of other ears than those for which they were intended prevented him from singing some stanzas from Hafiz intimating his presence ; and after waiting several irksome hours, he pettishly hauled up his anchor and drifted down the stream.

As he passed by a dangerous eddy formed by sudden projections of the opposing banks, and which afforded a last view of the castle, he fancied he saw a female figure leaning over the balcony ; but the leaden coloured mists were ascending too densely from the water to enable him to be certain, and in another instant he was spun out of sight by the velocity of the whirlpool.

Disappointed, though not disheartened, Alraschid next evening again piloted himself to Selim's mansion, and anchoring as before, waited impatiently for Noorun. In vain did he cast his eager eyes along the balustrades, and peep wistfully through the interstices of the exquisite tracery with which they were ornamented ;—a thousand times did he start at the slight rustling of the almost motionless palm-trees, and at every little flower leaf which fluttered along the wall, and dropped on the dark, star-spangled tide below. Grief and despair were racking his heart, and he was sulkily contemplating the undulating moon-beams around his fragile skiff, when a suppressed scream roused him like lightning from his reverie. It was his mistress that met his eye : she was flurried at this unexpected meeting ; her rich dress was carelessly disposed ; and her tresses having escaped from their golden band, hung a lovely veil over her beauties ; but

which vainly strove to shroud the flash of eyes which could have enthralled savages.

"Who art thou?" demanded she affrightedly.

"That same unhappy Parsee," replied Alraschid, "who has long sought to offer up his orisons to this glorious sun, but which luminary the clouds of disappointment have vigilantly concealed!"

"I remember thee now," said Noorun, affecting for the first time recognition; "if I mistake not thou art that same hair-brained boy who lately swam across here at the peril of his life, and who stands eternally opposite my window staring impudently?"

This sarcasm she blunted by a smile, which made her young gallant's heart quiver in its pulsation.

"Sweet Lady!" answered he, "I am that most unfortunate of wretches, but do not visit my want of courtesy with displeasure, since it is an offence occasioned by thy beauty."

"If good looks," rejoined the maiden, laughing, "be an inducement to bad manners, it were perhaps fortunate if you were of a more forbidding appearance—but are you aware of the great danger you run in thus approaching my father's residence, and of the equal jeopardy which I incur by granting such an interview?"

"As for myself," returned Alraschid, "should I give any thought to danger, I should be still more unworthy than I now deem myself to solicit your favour; but if you, lady, subject yourself to any peril by seeing me, how can I express my sympathy better than by striving to express the rapture I feel at your condescension? Oh that you had nothing to fear!—but I cannot be selfish enough to require the elysium of your company by hazarding your happiness.—Speak the word, and I will retire to misery,—to despair."

"Nay," answered the noble's daughter, "though I were to command your instant departure I should but consult either of our safety, yet, since you persevere in braving danger,—the greatest danger;—I will not refuse

being your companion. But tell me," said she shuddering, lest he should prove an infidel, though her heart, whispered otherwise, "Art thou then truly a Parsee?"*

"Only so far as respects thee," answered the lover smiling, and falling down in his canoe he made a genuflection to his mistress, after the fashion of that cast. "No, I am a Moslem, only son of Ajimut, whose dwelling is amongst yonder tamarind trees; there is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet!" this he fervently ejaculated.—Noorun's eyes sparkled.

"Art thou then a follower of Ali?" demanded she.

"Yes."—Noorun's eyes beamed with gladness.

"Then why, son of Ajimut," demanded she, "art thou miserable?" and having put this pleasing interrogatory, her lips remained tremblingly apart, from a modest timidity of having betokened too deep an interest in so young a friend—but they moreover betokened another, more blessed feeling.

"Ah, wretch that I am!" exclaimed he, "could Al-raschid pronounce himself miserable whilst beholding thee? and yet, alas, when banished from these charms, must he not be desolate in heart? the ear is ravished with the bulbul's rusadick,† but when all is hushed, the deadened sense derives no pleasure, save in remembering his dulcet strain."

"I have often heard," answered the maiden, "that young gallants have ever at hand a stock of sugared speeches, with which, like music-loving tarantulus, they spin webs for the unsuspecting damsels."

"Daughter of Selim," exclaimed the youth, interrupting her, "behold one whose breast is as free from guile as the kokil's‡ beak is from the harbouring the serpent's venom! one, fairest of creatures, who will un-

* A fire worshipper.

† The nightingale's love-lay.

‡ Sort of ring-dove.

dergo hardships, and spurn even death to merit and obtain thy favour!"

"Noorun leaned her head ponderingly upon her hand; her eyes seemed scanning the soul of her lover, as if uncertain whether he was worthy of confidence; after a short silence, during which the working of her features told the emotion of her mind, she said, "I am myself unhappy;" and ere the words fell hesitatingly from her lips, a gushing tear had rolled down her cheek and added its bitter mite unto the greedy flood below. Who can describe the effect this unlooked for sorrowing had upon our hero? Horror, at thinking so tender, so beautiful a being could be visited with any distress, for a moment paralysed his tongue, and before he could convey by words his concern, Noorun assuming a sudden but false composure, whilst she passed her robe across her eyes, exclaimed, "Farewell, son of Ajimut, you have witnessed my weakness; should you betray it—but you cannot by so doing render me more miserable. Farewell—another time I may inform you of what I at present allude to," and overcome with feelings unaccountable to Alraschid, she abruptly quitted the terrace.

Having introduced our readers to the first important interview of these two young persons, we think it unnecessary to detail many others which took place betwixt them; but in a few words, to mention that they became daily more enamoured, and that the reason of Noorun's anguish was shortly afterwards explained, as shall subsequently be developed.

Alraschid had succeeded even beyond his dreams in the prosecution of his suit, and it was not until he had fully gained the young lady's affections, that he began to consider he was nearly as far as ever from any prospects of obtaining her. The difference of rank betwixt them; the power, wealth, and pride of her parent, were effectual bars to any likelihood of success; and these mortifying reflections weighed more insupportably on his

mind, the more he ingratiated himself in the heart of his mistress.

It was upwards of a month subsequent to the conference we have described, that he proceeded as usual, when the shades of evening began to fall, to meet Selim's daughter. He found her in the accustomed place, and after a long delightful conversation, he, for the first time ventured to propose her leaving clandestinely her father's house, and fleeing with him to meet the world. Noorun's heart was spotless candidness, and she declared without reserve her willingness to join in the proposal but for her parent's sake. He loved her dearly ;—lived in her ;—and to desert him was to plunge him in distress. She had expatiated at some length on her baseness, should she adopt this course ; and Alraschid was as strenuously endeavouring to confute her arguments, when to his amazement she uttered a piercing scream, and retreated with the utmost terror into her apartments.

The lover with equal wonder and consternation gazed on the deserted balcony, endeavouring to discover some motive for so alarming and precipitate a departure, when his attention was quickly arrested by the appearance of a strange being rising slowly and uglily from the old lichen mantled well, which we previously mentioned. A blue flitting light displayed the contorted limbs and hunchback of a dwarf, with arms so disproportionate to his stature as caused Alraschid to doubt whether it were not an ape ; whilst a dark wizen face thickly thatched with hair, and a pair of small, twinkling, deeply seated eyes, scarcely declared him to belong to the human species. The dress of this personage was as extraordinarily grotesque as the rest of his appearance. A high black velvet cap, such as is used by calmuks, arose from his long wiry locks, and around his neck was strung a chain of beads, which suspended a large amulet of chased gold much disproportioned in weight to the necklace to which it was attached ;—his robe was of rich crimson silk embroidered with yellow lace, and his

sash or (cumberbund,) a white cashmere scarf; he had, moreover, immense peaked shoes profusely adorned with gold spangles, and in his hand he held a philosophical instrument, resembling an astrolabe. No sooner did he perceive the lover than he disappeared amongst the ruined walls, and the light gradually vanished.

Although naturally gifted with courage and good nerves, our hero was not without a spice of that superstition so universal in the east, and he had now but little doubt that what he had seen was one of those evil spirits of the night by which the neighbourhood was believed to be haunted. He had commenced a short mental prayer to his prophet, when his mind was hurried from such acts of piety by a yet more appalling apparition. From the same well, bounced out what had the seeming of a devil; his colour was of a deep black even to his hands and face; from his mouth proceeded by fits, flashes of fire, and he brandished fantastically a matchlock of curious manufacture. In stature he was no higher than the dwarf who had previously appeared, and though equally misshapen, he was all activity.

Without giving Alraschid much time for consideration, and without uttering a word himself this fiend applied his flaming lips to the matchlock, and instantly a ball whizzed within a few inches of the lover's turban. This had the effect of fully arousing all his energies, and whilst his destroyer was busied reloading his piece, he slipped his cable, and with intense solicitude committed his bark to the current. At this the dusky demon set up such a yell as made the youth's blood chill, and immediately he discharged another shot which struck the boat, and made some splinters fly.

Alraschid now nearly despaired of saving his life, and as a last resource, being without arms, he stretched himself along the bottom of the skiff, so as to shelter himself from the balls, and trusted the guidance of it to Providence. No sooner did he this, than his dwarfish

persecutor set up another yell. He however remained quiet, until having drifted down some distance he again ventured to raise his head, but another shrill scream accompanied by a shot which hit the canoe, made him cautious of repeating this. Thus motionless did he continue till he reached the whirlpool, when his bark not being steered, spun round with awful velocity and upset.

CHAPTER VI.

“There is I grant a triumph of the pulse
 A dance of spirits, a mere froth of joy,
 That mantles high, that sparkles and expires.
 Leaving the soul more vapid than before.”

YOUNG.

WHEN Noorun became thus acquainted with our hero, she was fifteen years of age, and as beautiful a creature as any of the children of men. Though born in India, her mother had been a Cashmerian, and she was nearly as fair as a maid of the isles of snow—but which one of them could have rivalled her eyes, so expressive, so overflowing with love and womanhood?—Or what heart could have withstood their soft dissolving glances, made softer by the lovely silken lashes which chastened their brightness? Her features were all full of feeling, and each grace was but the vehicle of expression. So justly harmonized was her figure, that the eye regarded her as if the earth were not her sphere: all was light—faultless—matchless,—and every turn and attitude could only be a change of elegance.

In short, such fancy we the spirits of that happy paradise, where mortal clay and imperfections encompass not, and where nothing but ineffable love and beauty can be abstractedly considered in their forms. Lovely as she was,—as amiable was her heart; ignorant of the world and all it contained, a stranger to everything but her father's household, or rather a small portion of that household, her breast could not be tainted by cankering worldliness, and all her thoughts were pure and innocent as the eyes which unintentionally bespoke them. But there was one circumstance which rendered her completely

miserable, and with which she had acquainted her lover on their second interview.

Selim's brother had been an eminent banker in Ougien, and dying suddenly, immensely rich, left one son under his guardianship. The mother of Omar, (such was his name) protested strongly against an uncle taking charge of the person of her son, whilst she survived, and being a religious zealot herself, she was more exasperated at having no voice in directing his education. Such an objection, was however overruled by means of the governor's power, and she removed indignantly with her private fortune to another part of the country.

Whether Selim was at first solicitous for retaining possession of his nephew's person, in order to destroy him, and secure his inheritance, is uncertain, as he permitted him to attain man's estate without being deficient in kindness, though he still kept possession of his property. Of Omar's character it will be improper now to expatiate, but this much we may observe, that he was believed by all who knew anything of that part of the country to exceed his uncle in villany and guile, as much as the Ganges surpasses Rocabad in majesty. But be this as it may, he was violently enamoured of his unfortunate cousin. Selim, perhaps from a prudential motive of retaining Omar's fortune in his family, had always regarded such a match with approbation, and even pledged himself to bring about its consummation. Noorun however detested him, as was natural, since both his character and person were odious, and her father, though often urged by his nephew, had too much parental fondness to force rashly the inclinations of one he loved so tenderly. The oftener and more strenuously that the governor pressed this proposal on Noorun, the more deeply fixed seemed her refusal and disgust; and he now sincerely regretted having made any promises to his nephew on the subject, and most certainly would he have refused fulfilling them, but Omar held a powerful spell over his uncle, which made him seriously pause before giving a decided refusal.

It was the very morning after that interview of the lovers, which had ended so unluckily for Alraschid, that Omar determined to obtain from Selim some definite agreement concerning his daughter.

"Nephew," said the Rajah, with much uneasiness depicted on his countenance, after a long conversation which they had held upon the subject, "Noorun cannot bring herself to love—nay, to bear you. Why then seek thus determinedly to render the poor girl miserable, by forming an engagement which will hereafter prove equally unpleasant to yourself, when you find her heart must ever be estranged?"

"Have I not then waited long enough?" fiercely demanded his ward.

"You have waited patiently, most patiently," returned his uncle," but she can never, I repeat, voluntarily be yours, and will you have me add one darker blot to the uncanceled sheet of my crimes, by breaking the heart of my daughter?"

Omar was for a few moments lost in thought.

"Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide."

muttered he. These words he repeated slowly and abstractedly;—"It is well," continued he with much fury, "I now know what to expect. But thou should'st at least have dealt honourably with me; with one, whose whisper—could blast—"

"Hush!—wretch!" exclaimed the Rajah, starting from the couch on which he had been reclining:—"Though master of my secrets—venture—hint—but at revealing them!—yet Omar—no more of this—you may—you must have my child—go! false and ferocious as you are—leave me!"—and Selim threw himself on the couch in an agonizing conflict of thought, whilst large beads of perspiration thickly studded his swarthy brow.

Noorun, who now entered, on perceiving her father's distress of mind, flew to the side of his couch to sooth and comfort him.

"Can you have one spark of virtuous or manly feeling!" exclaimed she, full of indignation at her cousin having penetrated the drift of this interview. "Is there no flaw of pity in your stony heart that you thus resolutely require my misery!—Omar, I detest,—abominate you worse than the infidel!—never will I unite myself to one so depraved; to one who employs himself in such unholy occupations."

"What then," returned the suitor in a low tone of voice so as to be unheard by his uncle, "Must thy venerable father fall a sacrifice to his daughter's unholy stubbornness?"

"Oh, to save him!" gasped the poor girl too inarticulately to be heard by her abstracted parent, "even my life is at your disposal,"—and she melted into a torrent of tears.

"Your hand is sufficient," answered Omar, with the most brutal indifference to her affliction. "When may I expect to be acquainted with your determination?"

"O leave us!" said the lady earnestly, and with every demonstration of horror.

"Ho! Ho!" responded Omar, in the same low voice,—"I see too well whence springs this violent antipathy;—but set thine heart at peace—I say, set thine heart at peace, for Alraschid, the son of Ajimut, thy intended paramour—that stealthy prowler of the night, lies buried in yonder rapids. And know—to-morrow I must again await your final answer," so saying he abruptly quitted the room, repeating to himself the words,

"Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide."

Noorun felt relieved by his absence, as when one

awakens from a horrific vision, but even such a diminution of her sorrow was of short duration, for her father seemed now resolved to unite her with Omar. From what he had frequently hinted, though carefully refrained from explaining, she had previously inferred that her cousin possessed some influence over his mind, which rendered it impossible for him to deny a boon formerly stipulated. For what else could induce Selim, so indulgent in all other respects, to be thus cruelly inflexible, in one of such paramount importance, to her happiness? This meeting had now confirmed all her suspicions; and she gave way to the darkest despair.

But there was yet another and more recent affliction, more bitter than her cousin's relentless persecution,—her lover had perished. This was the severest stab which the simple hearted maiden had yet suffered. The youth on whom she had so faithfully though quickly fixed her virgin affections, and who was the only being she trusted might eventually have rescued her from her obnoxious relative, was no longer left to be her defender! She turned her streaming eyes in silence towards heaven, and whilst her guiltless spirit petitioned succour from her prophet, she could not refrain from murmuring at the inscrutable ways of providence in thus suddenly recalling from earth her blooming gallant lover.

She had spent the whole of that evening weeping, shut up in her innermost chamber, and refused to sit or speak with any of the attendants, when Johorun, a pretty young female about her own age, and who was her most intimate companion, pertinaciously demanded admittance, declaring she had somewhat of great importance to acquaint her mistress. Noorun, overcome at length by the girl's importunity, opened the door.

"Can I not," exclaimed she, greeting the intruder with a glance of indignation, "be indulged even in my sorrows?"

"Ah," responded Johorun, falling on her knees, "can your friend, your associate bear to see you thus misera-

ble—and lonely ! Upbraid, but permit me to share your griefs, to accompany your tears,—” and here the affectionate maiden threw her arms fondly round her mistress’s neck and sobbed.

“An eternal cloud of sadness,” replied Noorun, “must now overshadow me. Time is but pain prolonged. O Johorun, how lovely, how loving was my young Alraschid !—was—and Omar !”—she shuddered as she pronounced the name. “Truly said the wretch, as he left me, ‘Never to be bride, many woes shall her betide.’ O that I now never may be a bride !—woes I cannot now feel. I shall soon be too callous to perceive them.”

“No, no,” interrupted her companion, “gladaess shall yet again visit our abode, and the bosom of my mistress be at ease. Believe me, your friend, your—acquaintance is not dead.”

“Not dead !” exclaimed the lady, her eyes brightening the more intensely as they dilated. “Blessed messenger !—dearest friend !—sister !”—and she kissed repeatedly her confidant until nearly exhausted.

“I have seen him,” returned Johorun. “He is at this moment in the castle.”

“In the castle ?” replied the lady, “Alraschid in my father’s castle !—how ?—Whence came he ?—and with my father’s permission ?—surely you must be dreaming.”

“Nay,” answered the girl, “I am not dreaming ; depend upon it, the son of Ajimut is in the castle ;—but listen patiently to what I feel bound further to disclose ; alas ! he is confined in the western bastion. I tremble to relate the rest—a convicted murderer.”

The Rajah’s daughter could not withstand this rapid vacillation of joy and disappointment, and after vainly struggling against such strong emotions, she fell into a swoon. All the zenana was instantly in a bustle and uproar. Some hastened with golden flasks of precious aromatics extracted by sage alchymists of Araby, others, with the goolab (rose-water) of Ispahan, and some with

chalices of water iced by the officious Abdars (water-coolers). Whilst we leave them thus busied in recovering Selim's daughter, it is necessary to recount how her lover, who was himself so nearly murdered, became thus imprisoned for the same heinous crime.

Alraschid, on the capsizing of his canoe, gave himself up for lost; fortunately, however, his persecutor had disappeared, and after some exertion he reached safely the shore. It was with the greatest dread he proceeded homewards, peering carefully around, lest his unearthly assailant should be lying in ambush, and take him unawares; and often did he start as some bush or withered stump bearing any resemblance to the dwarf's form met his eye amongst the surrounding groves;—all was however lonely, and all still, save the now distant murmurings of the waterfall, and the ceaseless chirping of the innumerable cicadas. The moon irradiated with her chastest beams the trees, of which not a leaf vibrated. They seemed lapt in Nature's choicest slumbers, waiting to be awakened by the morrow's sun; and the river having here regained its usual placidity, reflecting distinctly in black masses the foliage of its woody fringes.

Our hero's thoughts were too troubled to remark or appreciate the passing delicacy of the scene, and he hurried homewards vigorously. So the antelope, when hounds pursue, traverses the richest pastures with feelings only of dismay. On regaining his paternal roof he repaired to rest, but it was to a couch of sleepless anxiety. Every remembrance of his childhood respecting the haunted habitation of Selim recurred to his imagination with an appalling vividness, and their authenticity was fully corroborated—and his flesh quaked as he reflected on the hideous being who had so ruthlessly sought his life, and revolved his motives for such an action. Alraschid albeit imbued with the ghostly terrors of his country, was possessed of a venturesome and ardent spirit, and he resolved, though his life should be again

endangered by his temerity, to make an attempt at penetrating the mysterious circumstances of that evening.

Having provided himself next day about sunset with a strong piece of rope, and taken the precaution of arming himself with a favourite tulwar (sabre) he proceeded, not without feelings of intense anxiety, to explore the well from whence his murderously inclined enemy had arisen. The propinquity of the Sipra would appear to render a well unnecessary to the Rajah's stately mansion, did we not consider that the abruptness and height of the banks, and the muddiness of the water when swollen with rain, rendered it no small convenience. Such undoubtedly were the primary motives for which it had been constructed, but having fallen into neglect, it was now choked up and useless. This well or *bowly*, as it is styled in that part of India, was of very different construction from what the word implies to European fancy: their usual form is as follows. A long descent of steps leads to a landing place from whence another flight, or perchance more conducts you gradually to the water. The well itself, properly speaking, is a large excavation, twenty or thirty feet square, or much less, and proportionably deep; so it will be seen that when there is an abundance of water occasioned by rain it will extend to the lowest flight of steps, and will again by degrees recede as the drought lasts, till it ebbs fairly into the square portion which we would designate the well. These bowlies are usually very expensive, being constructed of large granite stone. Many are elegantly finished with galleries, and adorned with carving; and some are wonderfully extensive. They are most common in central India, and "*Ougien the beautiful*" has perhaps the very largest, and certainly the most expensive.

In unfrequented places, magnificent structures of this nature may frequently be fallen in with, and no population being near enough at hand to derive advantage from them, the water soon dries up, the well becomes filled

with leaves and sand, and its massive stones unhinged by trees which have unmolestedly rooted themselves in their mossy interstices. The banian tree is peculiarly partial to these dilapidated wells, and the finest and most luxurious of them will generally be met with in such congenial situations.

The one into which Alraschid was now determined to descend was precisely such as we have described, dry, ruined, and partly concealed by plants and shrubs. "If thou wert a human being!" said he to himself, "and this thine abode, thou art near thy latter end;" and so saying, he threw away his rope, which he found unnecessary, with an action expressive of determined revenge, and descended hastily the dilapidated steps. The bottom was full of rubbish, and there was nothing else to be seen but some large yellow frogs, which gave him a hoarse reception. The dusk of evening was now beginning to prevail, and he was on the point of again ascending, there being nothing peculiarly captivating in such a situation, when a bright ray of light met his eye, yet so minute was it, that he could with difficulty trace it to the spot whence it proceeded. He however did so; but all was clay, rubbish, and filth; and supposing it to be emitted by some fire fly, he kicked pettishly the place, when, to his utter astonishment, the well, for a height of nearly five feet, gave way, and displayed a subterranean chamber in which a charcoal fire was burning pretty clearly. There was no one there, and he had thus an opportunity of entering and examining the apartment. It was not much less than twelve feet square, and completely crammed with apparatus of most extraordinary descriptions. Various glasses—telescopes—spheres—horoscopes—numerous phials—books—manuscripts—chemical and mathematical instruments—with diagrams in curious characters, were huddled together in all directions. But what appeared most remarkable to Alraschid was the same identical matchlock which had so nearly dismissed him from all earthly relations.

Having hurriedly examined these objects, he turned his attention to the entrance, and found that what he had supposed to be stones and mud, was a piece of thick wood, carved, painted, and daubed over with cow dung and moss. He was now alarmed by the noise as of a padlock being withdrawn from a chain, and replacing properly the board, he precipitately concealed himself in a corner behind a pile of charcoal and firewood. Scarcely had he effected this, when a door which he had not observed, opposite to the entrance from the well, flew open, and the same dwarf he had formerly seen arise, entered. His dress was precisely as before, only wanting the high velvet cap; for his head was uncovered, and his long snaky locks hung down beside his forbidding, misanthropic visage. In his hand he held a bright box of gold covered with precious stones. Behind the dwarf came an aged female, bent, and decrepid; she supported herself with a long bamboo staff, which had a curiously carved silver head, and her dress was one plain white piece of muslin, which, wrapped closely round her withered limbs, resembled a winding sheet. Her swarthy shrivelled arms were adorned (or rather encumbered) with many heavy rings of silver, and her ancles supported likewise a massive pair of bangles,* composed of the same costly metal.

After a few minutes spent in strict silence, the dwarf replenished the fire, took off his peaked yellow slippers, and long scarlet robe, and put on another garment, or rather he girt himself with what appeared a white shawl, covered with red and black marks, the secret characters of his art. The old beldame followed his example in doffing her shoes, and all the ponderous ornaments with which she was burdened. The magician then opened an ebony cabinet almost buried in papers, and which contained nothing but a jet black stone, set on a magnificent tripod of pure gold, and in this were set seven

* Ornaments for the ancles which rest on the instep so called.

large precious stones, each of a different kind and colour ;—before this he prostrated himself after some ceremonies, and although not a word escaped him, his thoughts were evidently riveted in some unknown adoration. The feeble hag was meanwhile sedulously engaged in clearing the fire. The hearth she swept with her own robe, and then describing around it a circle, she strewed the same with what appeared to be fine white brilliant sand, and which she carefully borrowed from a silver coffer. She then placed a golden crucible of uncommon brightness with studied precaution and exactness on the embers, and withdrew.

This being all performed, the dwarf now advanced near the fire, and his aged associate with feeble difficulty kneeled before the ebon cabinet ; her whole soul appearing absorbed in devotion. The magician then traced with a white wand several figures on the sand, muttering slowly words, the import of which few may tell. He after this remained motionless and silent, his eyes fixed steadfastly and contemplatively on the crucible, and his arms crossed on the magic vestment. The hoary sorceress now joined him,—both stood speechless,—motionless ;—at last the dwarf opened the box he had all along kept in his left hand, and taking thence a small piece not bigger than a cherry stone, of a substance resembling amber, he dropped it with a trembling hand into the glowing crucible—an unnatural pallidness now seized the wizard, and the female shook as if suffering under some illness. A slight hissing noise was instantly heard, and the magician demonstrated every symptom of undergoing the most acute mental excitement. His spirit seemed writhing within him ; he tottered—his small eyes were blood shot and dilated ;—his hair bristled ; and his parched lips had here and there specks of foam, such as rocks steal from the giant fury of a cataract ; the hissing was quickly succeeded by a smoke so white, so fine, as to be at first hardly per-

ceptible: this rose slowly, more thickly, and in a pyramidal form, till at last the whole vault was impervious.

Alraschid could now discern nothing more; strange gurgling noises proceeded incessantly from the cloud; but the first articulate words he heard concerned himself too deeply to be easily forgotten. "Death!" exclaimed a voice which he recognized as the magician's.

"Hast thou then a second time deceived me?—Must my desired conclusions be thus ever baffled by thy venom!"

"Avaunt, son of little soul! and lesser nescience!" retorted the beldame in a croak the most unearthly. "Torment the destinies as you please, you will succeed no better in your labour. I tell you, Fate has fixed Noorun's fortunes otherwise. You may read but not pervert her book. She can never be related to any of her blood. Power he may obtain over her greater than bridegroom over bride, but she can never, if Fate's decrees are true, be Omar's."

"Accursed enemy!" ejaculated the wizard, "perjured witch, and traitress! it is thou who hast hitherto over-reached, and must ever over-reach me in intelligence.—But—never more. This night—this is the last time—this—this!"—and so saying, the wretch with a small poignard stabbed in the breast his aged co-partner in iniquity. The expiring female's shrieks, and eventually her moans, alarmed Alraschid, who could see nothing even indistinctly. Springing from his concealment, he rushed forward, hardly conscious of the action.

"Murderer!" exclaimed he, making at the same instant a random slash with his scymitar which had nearly proved the magician's death-blow. "A double vengeance shall now overtake you;" but before he had finished this denunciation, he stumbled over the body which lay weltering in its gore, and fell headlong on the floor. In one moment all was utter darkness and death-like silence, —which was shortly afterwards broken by a strange

distant yet distinct peal of laughter. So suddenly was the fire extinguished, so complete and awful the stillness which followed, and so unnatural the subsequent laughter burst, that our hero was undecided whether or not all this was but a delusion. As he groped about however, his hands encountered a splashy puddle of luke-warm blood, and the soaked vestments of the deceased, which too well assured him of the reality of what had taken place. His first care was to ascertain if the poor infatuated female was quite dead, and being convinced of this from the cessation of all pulse and respiration, he next consulted his own safety by endeavouring to withdraw from such a den of death and demonism. It was a considerable time before he could discover the outlet, and on doing so was not a little astonished to find it was not the same by which he had entered, but a narrow gallery. Supposing, however, that if the magician had withdrawn himself by this avenue, it must prove equally efficacious for his own escape, he carefully but resolutely proceeded. He had threaded the dark and dank passage for upwards of a hundred yards, when he was cheered by a light which afar off steadily and brilliantly dispersed its golden threads. He soon made up to this, and found it proceeded from a small square trap-door which was wide open.

Before venturing an entrance, he ascended a few steps and reconnoitered the apartment into which the trap door immediately conducted. It was furnished much in the same manner as the charnel house he had lately quitted, books and manuscripts crowded the shelves ;—and the floor was encumbered with philosophical instruments, some of uncouth construction, and others finished by the hands of first-rate European artists. Having finished his scrutiny, the lover began to argue with himself as to his best mode of action. Conscious of being in the very lair of that mysterious being, by whose enmity he had nearly perished, to remain their passive, he concluded was certain destruction ; whilst to proceed was

perhaps the same, only attended with greater temerity. Sooner, however, than return, the thought of which was sickening, and revisit the horrid blood-deluged den, he would have confronted any danger.

"Alas!" exclaimed he, regarding with horror his clothes, which being of white muslin, contrasted sadly with the bloody patches with which they were profusely stained, "alas! into what dismal adventures have I this day fallen!—it is only they who have seen what I this day have beheld, that can testify as to the existence of those beings with which fancy abundantly peoples innumerable places—but," continued he, "betide what may, I will go forward. Yes, Noorun, for your sake I will seek any danger." Saying this he entered, and instantly a tremendous noise made him shudder; there was no one save himself in the room, but the trap door was gone, nor could he with every attention discover where it was situated, and if he had to re-open it, would have surpassed his power. The valiant as the timid are tried more by fortuitous than optional danger, and it was with feelings much less tinged with daring hardihood, that Alraschid now prepared to prosecute his researches on finding retreat impossible. This momentary terror was however in its turn succeeded by a dogged determination, like what we may suppose possesses foreign warriors, who seeing the ships which brought them from home blazing on the impassable waters have nothing left but victory or death.

Opening the chamber door, he entered another which was much more neatly furnished—here were soft carpets from Persia, large luxurious couches and pillows, mirrors, and other rich furniture. A silver "kulian," (which is a Persian imitation of the hookah, and the same in principle, only on a smaller scale) was placed on the floor, as if some one had lately been smoking. From hence he proceeded to a spacious hall floored with black marble, the walls of which, composed of a cement that rivalled Parian marble in whiteness and polish, were

ornamented with flowers and leaves beautifully painted, so as to resemble mosaic work. Several fulsome panegyrics on the wealthy proprietor were intermingled in exquisitely traced golden Arabic characters.

Whilst standing here uncertain whether to advance further, the magician darted past him like an eagle, vociferating "Murder," and screaming as if undergoing the acutest torments. In a few minutes voices and uproar were heard, and Alraschid soon found himself surrounded by an armed host headed by the dwarf.

"Secure the murderer," said an aged well-dressed personage.

"Secure him!" responded the dwarf, "for God knows whose life he may have taken."

"I am neither murderer, nor robber," replied the lover firmly, "though I but lately involuntarily witnessed the perpetration of such a crime."

"What! insolent miscreant," retorted one of the officious attendants, "dost thou, insignificant of wretches, dare to raise thy voice in presence of Selim? the mighty—the wealthy—the victorious, the Omrah of thousands?" and so saying, the zealous parasite bestowed upon our hero a buffet with the handle of his scymitar. This indignity Alraschid's spirit could not brook, and he instantly attacked the insolent follower. The dwarf who was continually fluttering about, uttered a fiendish laugh on seeing this rencounter, but before any blood was spilt, both combatants were secured and disarmed.

"Away, away! with the young vampire!" exclaimed Selim. "Take him to the tower of iron, the western tower;—we shall discover to-morrow whom he may have slain,—and trust me, the guilty shall afford ample retribution—off with him I say to the western tower!"

Soon as this mandate was pronounced, the unfortunate stripling was dragged roughly out of the hall, and from thence along a dusky sinuous passage which terminated at a door well protected by bolts and iron square-headed

nails. This an attendant opened, and an oblong open court received them, which they crossed expeditiously, and arrived at the foot of a narrow winding stair-case.

"Up, wretch!" said one of his brutal keepers, accompanying the words with an energetic push. "I warrant e'er long we will be freed from further trouble regarding thee." The prisoner ascended sulkily the steps, without deigning a reply. A small landing-place now presented itself, fronting which was a gate of massive iron bars; it was the entrance to such a cage as we often see used for confining savage animals. This gate was soon opened, and Alraschid, who pondered a moment on the dismal den before him, was thrust unceremoniously in, the gate fastened with its several ponderous bolts, and a supernumerary chain added by way of certain security. His gaolers having now withdrawn, he had a horrid but uninterrupted leisure to meditate upon the strange and deplorable circumstances into which he was thrown by fortune and curiosity. Accused and almost convicted of a crime he had not committed, but of which he could produce no proofs to substantiate his innocence, he threw himself on the floor, and gave vent aloud to his sorrows, and imprecations on that accursed implacable being, who had caused and triumphed in his destruction. In this hopeless condition we must for a short time leave him.

CHAPTER VII.

"Ah, what will not a woman do who loves!
 What means will she refuse to keep that heart,
 Where all her joys are placed!"

ALL FOR LOVE, &c.

It will be remembered we left Selim's daughter in a swoon, from which she soon recovered after the restoratives customary in such cases had been applied. She immediately ordered all present excepting her confidant Johorun to quit the room, and the obsequious menials withdrew like so many automatons.

"O my friend!" exclaimed she, when they were alone, "what shall we do?—How preserve the miserable boy?—Counsel me, Johorun, counsel me."

"Alas!" replied her companion, "am I not like thyself a timid maiden, and one not half so clever?—how can my advice avail thee?—and yet truly something must be done to save him."

"Do you suppose then," demanded Noorun, "my father will have so hard a heart as to kill him?"

"Assuredly," answered her attendant, "although if it depended solely upon him, I would not despair; but life and death will be in Omar's hands."

"Yes, yes, too true," murmured the young lady, giving away to a fresh burst of tears. "And yet my Alraschid is innocent—his heart can have no participation in such crimes; not all the evidence on earth could persuade me that those dove's eyes of his were made to gaze on deeds of blood, committed too by his hands!—No."

"So I myself fully believe," responded Johorun,
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"but being found in the castle (God knows how he came there,) covered with blood, and brandishing a reeking sword are facts very unintelligible.—Moreover Mootee is missing, and Omar runs frantically about blaspheming and declaring that Alraschid has murdered his venerable mother—would to God we were assured of his innocence!"

"I tell thee, slanderous maiden," replied the Rajah's daughter angrily, "'tis impossible he can be otherwise—my gallant lover is as incapable of injuring woman, as the moon of scorching the ruddy blossomed pomegranate!—but why do we thus waste the waning night, in fruitless dilatory lamentations?—Can we form no plan for releasing the prisoner?—Suppose I go and solicit my father—he might—nay, he would listen to my entreaties."

"By so doing," answered Johorun, "you would acquaint him with your affections, which were in sooth, an imprudent way of consulting Alraschid's safety; since it would aggravate instead of allaying the Omrah's fury."

"Then let us endeavour," said Noorun, "to make our way to the western tower.—Fortune may present some means or other for effecting his escape—and as a last resource, I will supplicate my father. At all events we shall see Alraschid—hear the history of his misfortunes—and bestow our sympathy and compassion."

"Dearest lady," cried her friend, shuddering as she spoke, "are you serious?—think of the undertaking!—for besides the numerous gloomy passages we must thread before reaching the tower of iron, the dwarfish magician's apartments are hard by, and who in the castle has temerity enough at midnight to venture near them? besides all this, Omar himself I understand has possession of the keys."

"Cowardly girl!" answered her mistress, "and wilt thou then hesitate to follow, where I would lead?—but poor, fearful, yet fortunate damsel, you are not in love;

otherwise would you dare a dreadful, certain death :—I may excuse your timidity, you are not in love.”

“True, Noorun,” replied her handmaid with an arch but suppressed smile, “I am not in love, how can I be? no fault of mine, alas!—but nevertheless, think not that you may go whither I will not accompany you; I am ready.”

“Come then,” said the young lady, “if our consciences be pure, we have nothing evil to fear from the necromancer or his apparitions; we will at all risks make an effort to gain the iron tower, too rough a cage for my poor love-lorn nightingale.” The two girls now began assiduously to prepare themselves for their romantic expedition, and although the undertaking was to them vastly solemn and important, female vanity induced them both to take more than one peep into their Delhi mirrors, before taking a final departure.

We must however now return to our hero, whose thoughts were far otherwise engaged. Alraschid had remained without once moving on the stony floor, as he at first threw himself, with his turban off, and forehead reclining on his clenched hands;—his raven ringlets hung curling around his bared neck, and so fair was the unfortunate youth, that any stranger who had thus first beheld him, would naturally have concluded he was a woman. It may better be imagined than told how many and discordant were the reflections which divers associations hurried athwart his mind in rapid and feverish succession—to be under the same roof, so to speak, with her, for whom alone life was precious, but to be there as a criminal, as a murderer; whence he would on the morrow be brought most certainly to return no more,—to die as a felon,—and what was worse, to be regarded as such by his beloved,—excited in him a complex feeling of rage, grief, and indignation, which generally ended in a long tirade of maledictions upon that mysterious dwarf for whose enormities he was a destined sufferer. But this selfish consideration was uniformly

succeeded by another yet more awfully poignant; namely, that his inveterate and unaccountable enemy, a spirit of undefiled malignity, should be intrusted in obtaining Noorun for another—for Omar;—who was Omar?—Was then the hand, perchance the heart of Selim's daughter engaged?—blighting thought! when this struck him—he was frantic, and with tears of purest vexation he would offer up an unconnected petition to his prophet for assistance, but before that prayer was finished, he would break off into curses against his own miserable existence, and more especially upon the impious magician.

It was during one of those wildest fits of passion that he heard the great door at the bottom of the turret stair creak hoarsely, and a few seconds afterwards the sound of footsteps stealthily ascending, preceded by a sickly glimmering light. Soon afterwards the misshapen figure of the dwarf stood before his cell.—He was in his usual attire, of black cap, red gown, and yellow slippers, but in his sash was stuck a dagger, and in his hand was poised that same fantastical firelock, which it would appear Fate herself had fabricated for Alraschid's destruction. He remained for some time motionless, regarding his prisoner with a scowl through which, however, gleamed faintly a smile that triumphantly bespoke contemptuous hatred.

“Cruel being!” exclaimed the lover, raising himself, and darting upon the wizard a glance which would have arrested the lion in his rush of anger, “art thou come to imbrue thy hands yet deeper in blood?—has hell burst loose, and thou been particularly sent on earth to show that the atrocities of human nature are but virtues when compared with those of thy unearthly fraternity?”

“Silence!” responded sternly the dwarf. “Thy curiosity and presumption are thy ruin;—prepare for death; and if, boy, thou puttest efficacy in what the world calls prayer, pray quickly, whilst I prepare what shall translate your spirit to what befits it, that hell, you

so tauntingly mention, or at least to the society of some other houri than my Noorun."—So saying the magician with a ghastly grin, coolly commenced charging his firelock.

"Thy Noorun!" repeated Alraschid. "Thine! and art thou then that Omar, whose sole employment has been to render Selim's daughter miserable?"

"Yes," replied the dwarf, his eyes becoming nearly blood-shot with grim exultation. "Yes, I am that Omar! thy rival! thy joyous executioner!"

"Thou love Noorun!" returned the youth, "thou, a parricide!"

"Ha!" yelled Omar, "parricide! I can spare no time;" and he pointed his firelock through the gratings at his victim.

"I am ready as I ever shall be," said Alraschid hurriedly, as shutting his eyes he awaited with a stern determination pending death, though not without that chilly shuddering with which a consciousness of present dissolution ever checks the currents of life.—

"First answer me this," said the dwarf, "did any other eye besides thine,—see me—see me use this?"—touching his poignard.

"Demon!" replied his victim, "why thus prolong my torments?—what boots it if no mortal eye can attest the murderous act?—can it elude the cognizance of God?"

"Every eye that witnessed it," responded Omar, "shall be closed like thine!—no tongue shall ever lisp it?" and he again took the lighted cotton match to discharge his weapon, when a hand slapped him on the shoulder. With a start of trembling apprehension, the dwarf dropped his weapon, and turning round beheld the Omrah's daughter and her attendant. "In God's name and the prophet's," demanded he in a discordant voice, "What makest thou here?"

"And what right hast thou?" returned Noorun, "to invoke the name of God, or his prophet, who hast even

now confessed thyself a parricide?"—"Did any other eye than thine see me use this?" pointing to his dagger, and imitating his manner.

"Ha!" exclaimed the magician, turning pale, "it is thus that the wise are over-reached, baffled equally by doting age, and the frivolity of youth?"

"My Noorun! my own Noorun!" cried Alraschid, "let me but embrace thy hand, and I shall die thrice happily; O, Noorun, I am as innocent as thou art of this crime; he is the murderer; and my false accuser!"

The prisoner pressed as near the object of his love as the avaricious bars would permit; Noorun sprang also forward, and spite of the magician's tiger glare, their eager and lovely lips met betwixt them. The noble's daughter wept, and smiled, and wept again as she kissed her lover; but he shed no tear: his soul was overflowing with untainted ecstasy. Their respective spirits were flitting in their eyes; and had either then winged its way to Heaven, the other would have been drawn to keep company with its sympathising consort.

"Stand back, syren!" exclaimed Omar, fiercely, as laying hold of the lady, he dragged her remorselessly from the bars. "Nothing," continued he, "may save his life; and ye, senseless unnecessary creatures, unless willing to partake of his portion, had better speedily retire."

Alraschid, on seeing the noble minded maiden in Omar's clutches, flew against his cage with the fury of a tigress, who finds her offspring in the possession of the hunter. "O slay me!" cried he, "but lay not a finger upon her!"

"I will not leave this," replied Noorun, resolutely, "and thou murder him?—murder one innocent, as thou didst thine own hoary headed parent?—Monster!—for all thine ingrained wickedness—for all thy magic power and other unhallowed arts—thou durst not profane one hair of his guiltless head!—no, thou savage parricide!—my father's ears have never yet been supplicated in vain

by his child; and offer any indignity to this ill-used boy, and I will kneel before my father till life leaves me; but my expiring words shall be to him and to God,—revenge on Omar, the murderer,—the parricide!”

“O yes!” interrupted Johorun, who had remained all this time in great perturbation, silent, and trembling, “be pacified; and for Heaven’s sake spare the young man’s life; what dreadful discord must otherwise ensue!”

“And shall I?” answered Omar furiously, “shall I thus voluntarily deliver myself up into the bonds of scoffers and informers? Shall my hitherto unblemished reputation receive the stigma of infamy from mine own hands, when now,” levelling his match-lock, “they can blot out for ever even a shadowy suspicion of guilt?”

“Never!” interrupted Noorun, “whilst I can bear testimony against thee.”

“Hah!” exclaimed the dwarf with a scowl which would have chilled the high-spirited maiden’s blood, had she not been elevated to a degree almost verging on delirium, by the noble consciousness of defending her lover.

“Then thou must accompany him!—thy mouth, lovely creature, much as I adore thee, must be cold!”

“What, kill my mistress!—the Rajah’s daughter!” shrieked Johorun, and she was quitting precipitately the dungeon for help, when the magician rudely stopped her. He was now evidently much embarrassed as to the course he ought to pursue; to destroy the daughter of Selim was blighting for ever his own prospects concerning her, and subjecting himself to the certain and unappeasable retribution of his uncle, should he ever become acquainted with her fate;—again, to permit either of them to leave the spot was equally dangerous, for who more than Selim desired some plausible handle to effect his destruction?—for several minutes he remained motionless, with his back placed against the only avenue of escape, fixed in gloomy abstraction, revolving dark designs.

The agitated young lady with throbbing heart, and

streaming eyes reclined faintly against the gloomy prison grating, her hand clasped in Alraschid's, who pressed it a thousand times to his dry lips; her attendant hung close to her mistress with her arms around her neck in an agony of apprehension.

The magician's swarthy and harshly delineated features bespoke, like a black troubled sea, the tempests then careering over his soul; thrice did he grind convulsively his teeth, and grasp with his lank clammy fingers the dagger which glittered at his side, and as often did he regard his rival with a basilisk look which none but the pre-eminently wicked could have beheld without shuddering.

"Daughter of Selim," said he at length, "will you, or will you not promise, nay swear inviolable secrecy regarding what you have this night unfortunately learnt concerning me?"

"On two conditions I will," replied she.

"What are they?" demanded Omar.

"First, that you straightway release this prisoner," said she, turning her eyes expressively on her lover; "and secondly that you engage henceforth to refrain from persecuting me with your addresses."

"Now, may eternal fire first dissipate me!" howled the magician, "sooner!"—and his sides heaved under the emotions he experienced, as he paced rapidly to and fro on the small landing-place.

"Then go," said the heroic maiden addressing her companion, "and acquaint my father where and how I am situated, whilst I here watch over the son of Ajimut's safety."

"Never!" ejaculated the fiend, and drawing forth like lightning that same khungar which had but lately performed too well its part in the bloody tragedy, he pounced with the alacrity and malignity of a wolf on the tender girl.

"Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide,"

screached he, raising at the same instant his un pitying steel, and more un pitying arm. Alraschid fell on his knees, with clasped hands; he could not speak, nor move; Johorun sunk senseless,—and now if there be any one, whatever his creed,—whatever his wisdom,—who may discredit the especial interference at times of an omnipotent and incomprehensible Providence, let him ponder on this incident;—for although Omar was stoned at heart for the perpetration of this atrocity, he felt a secret spell too strong even for his iniquity to loosen.—It was not love;—his breast never harboured love,—it was not pity; his heart was impervious to pity—but his nerveless arm refused to deal the deadly blow; the dagger dropped glitteringly from his grasp; and after a pause which appeared as if every faculty of his mind as well as body had been for the time annihilated; he darted down the steps with a furious velocity as if it were to avoid an unceasing infliction of suffering.

For some seconds neither Alraschid, nor Noorun spoke a word, so astounded were they at what had happened; at last she suddenly started from the ground where the inhuman wretch had dragged her, and catching up his relinquished poignard and matchlock she thrust them through the bars; then leaning her face against them she gave way to a long and bitter flood of tears. He did everything in his power to console her; he kissed her eyes, her lips, her feverish forehead, and murmured the softest soothing to her perturbed mind. In the meanwhile her companion on recovering, wrung her hands, and sobbed loudly; but she was evidently as much affected for her own safety as at the touching scene before her, and she sat cowering at her mistress' feet, grasping her garments, as if by so doing she lessened the probabilities of danger.

Such was the group when the magician again appeared before the dungeon. On finding his arms gone, (and knowing the match was extinguished) he gave a scornful

smile which insinuated that if necessary there was no scant of others at his command.

"Cousin," said he with a voice which faltered from the influence of passions which he wished to conceal, "I will free this headstrong boy from the fate he merits; I will free him I say, but hear my stipulations: you, Noorun, will promise never on any occasion, not even in the throes of death, to divulge, or insinuate my——" and he stammered as he pronounced the words, "my merciless madness."

"Yes," replied she, "provided you maintain the compact which I formerly mentioned."

"Well, well," answered Omar, "agreed; you swear."

"By Allah and our Prophet," returned Noorun, "I will never be the first to break this vow."

"And you, menial?" said he, addressing Johorun.

"O yes!" answered the girl, "I swear by everything sacred and solemn, never to open my lips on what has passed this night, as long as my mistress keeps the secret."

"And you?" said Omar to his prisoner.

"I," replied Alraschid, "will swear nothing, what is death to me?—far from a foe!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the dwarf—then after a little thought, he continued. "No matter—for that, no matter—but one thing you must swear, otherwise I cannot release you—you will make no attempt upon my person—when you may have obtained liberty."

"O, no," exclaimed both females, "we will be his surety."

"So much," answered the youth, "I will certainly promise, you may apprehend no personal violence from me; but this shall not apply to a future day."

"Hah, hah!" returned Omar writhing his visage into its most misanthropic cast, though he intended to express his fiendish jocularly; "no,—trust me no—and yet young cockerel thou crowest, as if still unclipped in

wing ; however, your promise is now sufficient, for though foolish, rash, presumptuous, I give you credit for what mankind call *honesty*. Hah, hah !—there, be free ; and, remember ;—remember when you next come sillily under my power, how narrowly you have this time escaped me !” having uttered these last words slowly and fervently, he threw down a couple of large keys and descended leisurely the staircase.

It was not without great difficulty that Noorun assisted by her friend managed to open the stiff locks, and withdraw the heavy bolts of the cell.

“ Now, flee Alraschid !” exclaimed she as the task was finished, “ flee, and O beware of my cousin !”

“ Canst thou command me to do so ?” replied her lover, springing from his confinement, and clasping his fair deliverer to his bosom. “ Do you suppose it possible for me to exist apart from all happiness ? and thou, my preserver, art all my hopes and happiness.”

“ Nay, but Alraschid,” returned she hurriedly, “ you must for awhile absent yourself, not only from me but from the vicinity of Ougien, it is indispensable ; should you remain here, my father—no, perhaps not my father, but Omar will I know seek doggedly your life ; Alas ! what will then be my fate ?”

“ And is not death, my love,” answered he, “ preferable at any time to suspense ?—to me, can it be put in comparison with a dreary existence protracted in exile without one hope of seeing thee ? and shall it,” continued he, “ be any personal apprehensions which may induce me to relinquish a chance of again seeing, and eventually perhaps meriting to obtain one to whom, alas ! I durst not now aspire.”

“ Thoughtless boy !” responded the noble’s daughter, “ if not for your own sake, nor for mine, think at least of your family !—O think of your aged parents, and of your tender sister Rhada ; will they not experience my father’s direst anger should it be known you are haunting this part of the country, and more especially making

your suit clandestinely to me ?—but if gone, and no one save myself knows whither, I will then undertake to protect your father, mother, and gentle sister ; my supplications shall plead powerfully for them should they fall under his indignation : need I say it sorrows me to part with you ?—but affection must for a time yield to reason ; yes, we must for a time not know one another ; afterwards—I at least will pray constantly for brighter days.”

“And can you,” replied he with an expression of mournful surprise, “thus urge me to destruction ?—do you sincerely regard your poor slave and thus ordain him to a life of wo and wandering ?—for separation from you is unremitting wo. Every moment of absence like the pulsations of an expiring wretch will beat for me with misery. I will seek your father, proclaim my innocence, and Omar’s guilt.”

“First, son of Ajimut,” replied Noorun with somewhat of proud displeasure in her accents, “do you call in question my affection ? I, who have for my love incurred every risk, even the anger of a haughty father !—why did I ever see you ?—tell me, did I ever doubt your constant and plighted love ? nay but tell me ?”

“I am mad,” exclaimed Alraschid, “my tongue utters what my thoughts are far away from ; yet how can I bring myself to leave you ?—imagine—in pity, imagine my feelings.”

“First tell me,” said the lady, “do you really suppose because I advise you to leave Ougien that I do not love you ?—come say.”

“As I hope for Paradise,” replied he, pressing her more closely to his breast, “I live but in believing so, and as I also believe in our prophet, death, that only real monarch, can break my affection and my vows.”

“Well, now we must part,” answered the maiden, “here take this key, it opens the postern gate ; and—flee—flee from Ougien !”

The lover took the key with a trembling hand and

the party descended in silence the turret ; he remained lingering at the bottom, loth to depart.

"In the name of Allah," said Johorun running up to him, "waste no more time ! for see the first delicate blush of morning has already tinted the eastern haze and the birds are chirping."

"One moment, one moment more !" rejoined Alraschid, "it may perhaps be my last ; thou mayest have remarked from thy terrace a small mosque protected by a solitary burgot tree ?"

"Yes," replied Noorun, "the good priest Ibrahim's name is well known here."

"I wonder not," replied Alraschid, "that venerable man is to me more than a father, I will acquaint him regularly with my future fortunes and he will I am certain tell them to you."

"O lose no opportunity," answered his mistress, whose voice was almost choked for articulation, "of informing me where and how you are ; and by the same means rely on speedy answers if they can possibly be conveyed."

"Farewell then," said Alraschid, "farewell my lovely generous maiden !—the son of Ajimut is at present poor, unworthy of so high, so peerless a lady's love, but if acquired merit and honour may hereafter entitle him to what his heart prizes next to heaven, God may deign to hear his aspirations, and by granting thee, permit him to anticipate the blessedness of futurity !—farewell beloved girl ;—my noble matchless girl !—when that pitying moon first greets yonder balcony, think of me ; think of one who will ever think of thee ; then offer up for me a silent prayer, and I shall be prosperous—be like a guardian spirit hovering over me in danger and in sorrow, and O be thou a protecting angel towards my aged and unoffending parents !"

This he spoke in despite of all emotion, and his tears in conjunction with Noorun's trickled betwixt their

joined cheeks like a pearly rill between two flowery hills ; after one long, long repeated embrace, and another to Johorun, he threw open the small postern wicket, and though his eyes were too full to see, he indulged in another useless gaze ; then waving wildly his hand, he fled from the castle as if pursued by every fiend which Omar and all the necromancers of Araby could conjointly have conjured up against him.

CHAPTER VIII.

"This is the man should do the bloody deed;
 The image of a wicked heinous fault
 Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his
 Does show the mood of a much troubled breast."

KING JOHN.

ALRASCHID continued at this rapid pace until the Rajah's castle was hidden by the dense surrounding woods; he had selected no particular path, and when he began to give attention to the objects around, he found that he had been hurrying away in a direction quite opposite to his paternal mansion. This, however, gave him but momentary concern, he had determined in obedience to his mistress to quit the district of Ougien, and a parting with his family under such circumstances would he knew have been insupportable.

The glorious sun was now just about to surmount with all that perceptible alacrity so conspicuous in the tropics, the cloud circled horizon, which a thousand diverse, and rich glowing tints heralded the propinquity of his effulgence;—a balmy freshness possessed the air; on every side numerous birds were busy attuning their native hymns; aromatic herbs and grasses diffused profusely their fragrant incense as if in adoration of the approaching luminary; whilst herds of gracile antelopes bounded at intervals across his path with that buoyancy and jocundity of morning so universal in nature.

Unattentive to all such exhilarating incidents, Alraschid pressed on till he reached the small isolated mosque of father Ibrahim. From earliest childhood, he had been as much attached to this excellent man, as he was im-

pressed with reverence for his virtues ; his youthful ideas, sentiments and pursuits had been alike directed by the Shaik's authoritative solicitude, and from his invariable affability and kindness, the pupil's affections were fixed upon him more as a parent than a pastor ;—with less agitated feelings he drew nigh his humble retreat.

Ibrahim had been up for some time, and was sedulously engaged in preparing those garlands of flowers which he daily used for decking out the tomb of his departed pattern in piety. On perceiving his young friend, he first blessed him, and then gravely inquired whither he was bound at so early an hour.

Alraschid, who durst never even prevaricate in his ghostly father's presence, after some hesitation narrated at full length all his late adventures. Ibrahim listened with marked attention, and showed more interest and emotion than his visitor had ever before seen him betray. "Is then," demanded he, "that hitherto unknown magician, whose diabolical fame has become so widely familiar, no other than Selim's nephew?"

"The same and no other, you may rely," answered Alraschid.

"I wish from my heart I had known all these particulars yesterday," muttered he to himself, "but however 'tis a valuable discovery—and what are your intentions?—where do you propose seeking refuge?"

"Indeed!" replied the son of Ajimut, "I know not, unless I find my way to Agra, for there I have an uncle who dotes upon me and would be delighted to show me every kindness, but your advice shall be my steady rule of conduct."

"I wish," muttered Ibrahim, "this had all happened sooner. But see, the sun ascends rapidly the skies! to your orisons, my son;—place your hopes and confidence in him who alone can safely direct you;" so saying, he betook himself to his devotions; and our young hero going a little distance off, followed his example. When their exercises were finished, the priest took his

disciple by the hand, and leading him into the hut, presented him with some boiled rice, milk, and a piece of sugar cane, a repast which proved acceptable enough, as he had scarcely touched food the preceding day.

"My son," said Ibrahim, who having finished this early meal, was engaged in performing sundry ablutions, "from the history you have given me of your perilous encounter with that fell enchanter (or rather perhaps evil spirit) as well as your unfortunate fancy after the daughter of one so infinitely above your own sphere, I strongly approve of your resolution, to leave these parts for a considerable time, and though Agra is too far, I would recommend, that you remove at all events to such a distance as to be without Selim's jurisdiction; his daughter having advised this, proves her sound sense, and also her sincere affection; but you must strenuously endeavour to get command of this violent love; you must not permit it to engross your mind, otherwise like all other strong passions, such as gaming, avarice, ambition, it becomes vicious, and will render you utterly useless as a moral agent, a mere shadow of what a being blessed with reason should be. Employ yourself in some active pursuit; and Time, that universal obliterator, will chasten down the stormy feelings by which you are now distracted, and ultimately erase in a great measure the deep channelled remembrance of things at present painfully distinct; you will then look calmly back on these eventful passages of your life, and regard them but as fitful dreams."

His companion groaned aloud, but ventured not to contradict the sage.

"Had you been here yesterday," resumed the Shaik, "situated as you now are, I could have entrusted you to a friend who would have shown you kindness and protection, and been perchance afterwards of service: but as I know not where he may now be, or when I shall again see him, I have fortunately another resource of which we will avail ourselves. At Aggur dwells a particular friend of mine, who is wealthy, good, and powerful;

for my sake he will I know befriend you ; but I will send him a few lines ;" and he pulled forth some rude writing materials from under an old mat on which he usually sat, and commenced a letter.

His guest thanked him gratefully for this kindness, and after he had finished and sealed it, he said :

" My second father," (for so he generally styled Ibrahim,) " I already owe you obligations greater than I can express, yet from the love you have ever shown me I feel emboldened to demand a further proof of your generosity."

" How ?" asked Ibrahim.

" In the first place," continued Alraschid, " relieve the anxious minds of my family from apprehensions concerning me, soothe their fears, and tell them everything save the reasons of my flight ; lastly, I have a dearer, more delicate request, your performing which will render me eternally your debtor, and make me at least negatively happy. I promised the Rajah's daughter that I would inform you of my future destinies, and presumed so far as to guarantee your sympathy in endeavouring to forward them to her ; your answers to me will not I am certain be silent regarding her fortunes."

" Is that all !" answered the priest, " then set yourself at ease ; for I sometimes am visited by the Omrah's retainers and servants, and will do my best in your behalf as far as is consistent with safety. I however hope you have formed no unconquerable attachment there."

The young man's blush told what his lips durst not have denied.

" Well," resumed Ibrahim, " I trust 'tis otherwise, for certain disappointment must attend such presumption and render you unhappy, but be circumstances what they may, your secret, my son, is safe with me ; so set yourself, I repeat, at ease, I cheerfully undertake the task, and will lose no opportunity of bestowing on your young hearts the balm of peace. I will visit your family this very day, but here is your letter to Abdulatiff at Aggur ; be careful of it, entrust it into no other hands than

his for whom it is intended. Aggur is from here little more than thirty coss ; if you follow that road you cannot fail reaching it easily in two days. But I forget, you have been there ; as the way, however, is inhospitable, you must be furnished accordingly ; you are unarmed I see, take this scymetar and preserve it for my sake ; it has, I assure you, graced nobler hands ; and, stay, you must be yet further provided."

He then lugged from out a dirty crammed corner an old earthen pot, and thrusting in his hands pulled out a quantity of rupees mixed with golden mohurs ; the youth accepted of the weapon but refused to take the money.

"Come, come," said Ibrahim, "modesty is unavailing, I do you no favour ; you think me indigent because I condemn such trash, but if I wished it, I could procure abundance even of this dirt, which mankind hanker after to madness, and which has caused more wickedness than Eblis."

Alraschid durst not disobey, but accepted reluctantly the treasure.

"Now," said the Shaik cutting short the expressions of his gratitude, "go forth to the world, go forth, and behold yet more of man's guile, folly, and inhumanity—but add not thou thy mite to the dark ocean of immorality !—to Abdulatiff—to Aggur," continued he, thrusting him gently and almost affectionately from his cottage ; "my thoughts have been already too much taken up with worldly things ;—to Aggur ; and may Allah and the blessed prophet attend thy inexperienced path ! may they conduct thee, my son, to Truth and Virtue, and by their means to honour, glory, and happiness ! My prayers shall be lifted up for your success ; my eyes when you are not aware, may be upon you.—Farewell."—He then slowly closed the door, and commenced chanting solemnly the Koran.

After straining his eyes for some sad minutes on the white distant battlements of Selim's mansion, which were partially visible amongst its woods, from this small eminence, Alraschid turned away with a sigh to pursue

his uninviting journey. The road now lay over an open uncultivated country, bounded by little hills whose brown and barren sides afforded but scanty pasturage for numerous herds of cattle, and abundance of different kinds of game.

After passing the squalid village of Doubla, about four miles, he came to a river which crosses the high road, and is called the Chuta (or small) Cali Sind; fatigued, and thirsty from the heat, he sat himself down on one of the rocks which studded its channel, and refreshed himself with its grateful waters. He lingered here listlessly for a considerable time, reviewing past occurrences; and the more he meditated, the more miserable appeared his expectations: he was relinquishing everything dear to him on earth; and he already felt, as if irrevocably unlinked from everything it contained; the future he durst not contemplate; it was to him like gazing into some murky, bottomless gulf which renders dizzy the brain. From this heart-saddening reverie he was seasonably aroused by the approach of a sturdy and rather elderly personage, who had the appearance of a pilgrim. This person sat down within a few paces of him, and without speaking commenced drinking greedily from the stream.

"Where are you going?" demanded Alraschid civilly.

"Ram, Ram!" responded the stranger, a form of salutation universal in India amongst travellers.

"Do you journey towards Aggur?" again asked Alraschid, after having returned his hail.

"Aye, I go eastward," replied the stranger laconically.

"I am bound in the same direction," returned the youth, "if you have no objection, we may keep company."

The pilgrim made no answer; but replenishing his pipe, which consisted of a cocoa nut filled partly with water, and into which was inserted a wooden tube on the principle of the hookah, he smoked vigorously, and apparently without paying any attention to his companion. Our traveller concluded him to be a Hindoo men-

dicant, under some holy vow, and unwilling to press further his society, as it seemed irksome, he leisurely adjusted his clothes, which he had thrown off for the purpose of washing himself, and resumed his journey. The stranger, after once more charging his pipe, and lighting it from a large piece of burning cow-dung which he carried purposely in a calabash suspended from his neck, got up and followed, humming at the same time an uncouth ballad of Mahratta chivalry. On overtaking Alraschid, he commenced the conversation, and instead of proving morose and reserved, he was communicative and entertaining. He abounded with anecdote, and information; and although at times a mental gloominess would suddenly depress his spirits in their freest flow, he was on the whole a very entertaining and delectable associate.

Happening to mention Selim, the lover could not help heaving a heavy sigh, which, though it elicited from his companion no remark, could not have escaped his observation.

"I have heard," said the pilgrim, "many horrible stories concerning the magician Omar, who, report says, dwells in the Omrah's castle; of one supposed dreadful specimen of his powers a relation of mine was an eye-witness."

"Indeed!" replied Alraschid with some earnestness. "Pray what was that?"

"You must know," continued his fellow-traveller, "that several years ago, there lived near the large Ghaut of the principal tank in Ougien, a wealthy Bunian (merchant), it is generally asserted that Omar, whose father at that time carried on business as a banker in the same place, had made a proposal of marriage to this merchant's daughter, which on account of his unprepossessing appearance, (and perhaps wicked disposition) was rejected with some contemptuous circumstances. As to the truth of this I will not answer; but certain it is that the same young lady was affianced to the son of an old

friend of her father's with much pomp and merry-making. The same evening, however, that she was conducted to her husband's house, no sconer had she entered, and the dower been delivered over, than an immense alligator came forth from an old ruined building hard by, and made his way straight to the bride's chamber. This threw the whole family as may be supposed, into the utmost consternation, but how much greater horror when the slimy monster spewed forth many hundreds of the deadliest serpents, followed by a tide of flames which nearly consumed the house! Every one fled from the place screaming with terror, and when some mustered courage enough to return, there was nothing to be seen, save here and there a snake coiled up, or scorched, but the alligator, young bride, and rich dower had all disappeared."

"What!" exclaimed Alraschid with evident anxiety; "and did he murder the wretched female?"

"Who?" demanded the stranger.

"Who!" replied he, hesitating, "why—the alligator;—yet how," resumed he, fearful of raising suspicion in his companion's mind that he knew perchance more of the character of Selim's nephew than himself, "how do you suppose this almost incredible occurrence was effected by Omar?"

"I suppose so!" replied the pilgrim; "did I say I supposed so?—No. All I mention is, that it was whispered about, how the body of a woman without a head was shortly afterwards discovered festering in the Sipra; at all events, neither bride, nor dower have since been heard of. Some people, who are bolder, or who pretend to know more than others, declare that no one but himself has art and magic might sufficient to conjure up so hideous and destructive a being, saving always the prince of darkness. O! he is the king of all enchanters; the dark eye of knowledge—skilled, inscrutable, and—no one was ever known to escape his vengeance."

Our adventurer deemed it unnecessary if not imprudent

to contradict the latter part of his companion's discourse, by acquainting him how narrowly he had eluded Omar's bitterest indignation;—and they continued their journey, the pilgrim recounting many diverting stories.

About sun-set they reached the village of Toneriah, and having as usual in the east looked out for the tope (or grove) in which way-farers are wont to sojourn, they each despatched separately their simple meal, and having afterwards chatted for awhile over a pipe, they wrapped themselves in their robes, at the bottom of a shady mango tree for the night's rest.

Alraschid, though jaded with the day's fatigue, could not sleep; he was often accustomed to lie, his eyes scanning the spangled sublimity of night, and thus give scope to all the exuberance of a youthful imagination. If my spirit (he would think) were like yon limpid lightnings, unthralled, unattached to the grossness of earth, how ecstatic were it to shoot atwhart that unsunned firmament when all is stormless and silvery as now!—or if those twinkling orbs were each the abode of happy spirits, what a blissful community!—what a sublime society of joyous virtue!—that bright galaxy might be perhaps one loving family of sisters or brothers; and those two pale ones at a little distance, lovers, like me and Noorun. Such were the fantastical imaginings which would frequently amuse him, when the still solitude of night prompted his mind to stray into such futile speculations. He was just in such a fanciful wakefulness, when he heard what sounded as the unsheathing of a sword, and raising his head, he beheld with dismay the pilgrim standing near, with a naked sabre, and his brawny arm bared for execution.

“Youth of untoward destiny!” said he with a look of resolute murder: “I had thought to have despatched thee in thy slumbers; but it matters not, the arm of Runjeet valueth no man!”

Whilst delivering this short address, our traveller had scarcely time to start up, disengage himself from the long robe with which he was encumbered, and draw the wea-

pon, (which fortunately was by his side,) before the assassin levelled a severe blow at his head. This he as fortunately parried, and conscious of fighting for life, he exerted every faculty. His opponent was tall, powerful, and an expert swordsman ; Alraschid was active, courageous, and with the eye of an eagle ; he had moreover complete mastership of his weapon.

Asiatics use their scymitars in a very different manner from what we do the sabre ; instead of slashing they literally cut, giving a slight blow, and drawing the blade towards them at the same instant, by which means they inflict dreadful gashes. It is for this reason their swords are kept always excessively sharp, and therefore agility, not bodily prowess frequently decides combats of this nature. It was to the former our young adventurer owed his safety. Having warded off the pilgrim's first attack, and collected presence of mind, he wrapped his robe round his arm as a buckler, and instantly in return assaulted Runjeet. The very first cut he delivered with his weapon, which was razor sharp, entered his antagonist's wrist, nearly to the bone. Though not instantly disabled, Runjeet was weakened, and what was worse he lost all command of temper. Bestowing an awful curse on his boyish adversary, he rushed in, bent on exterminating him by a few blows in which were collected his entire remaining strength,—but the lover, alert from his natural equanimity of mind, and being uninjured, eluded this ferocious rally, without however being able from its suddenness, and vigour to act otherwise than on the defensive. But his antagonist previously distressed by pain, and loss of blood, could make no further effort, and flourishing feebly his strengthless blade, he sunk unwillingly on the earth. Alraschid might now with perfect facility have despatched his victim, had not the better feelings of his heart checked him whilst his very blade was uplifted.

“ Wretch ! ” exclaimed he, wresting the sword from his enemy's nerveless grasp, “ what induced thee to

attempt my life?"—"Have I ever in anything injured thee?—say, art thou mad?"

"If the deliberate commission of crime," replied the prostrate pilgrim, "be a proof of madness, then I am insane. No, I sought to destroy you, because I had stipulated for your death!—for another's benefit—and my—guilt,—but spare my life!"

"I would not," returned Alraschid, "unnecessarily imbrue my hands in the blood of any reptile; not even when such a despicable one as yourself treacherously spirts his noxious venom—your worthless life is safe. But tell me, how you could stipulate for the murder of one hitherto unknown to you."

"Generous youth!" responded Runjeet, "had I known thee better, I could never by any means have been brought to attempt thy destruction; but I am at present under the servitude of a dangerous and rigorous master, whose behests present circumstances render it impossible for me to disobey. Need I name him, who alone could plot for thee such a fate?—need I say Omar?"

Alraschid started as he pronounced the detested name. "Has my deadly and dastard foe then," said he, "so soon renewed his persecution?—surely his malignity never sleeps!—but by what means did you, without inquiring my name, or having seen me before, discover that I was your unsuspecting quarry?"

"From my master's minute description of you," replied he; "from some parts of our conversation, more especially when it related to Selim, and from other trifling circumstances which fell under my observance, I was certain you were the son of Ajimut, and his hated rival. That I have not succeeded in executing Omar's injunctions gives me a pleasure I never before experienced, greater than when in the wildest career of my enormities, success has been most complete or most unexpected.—You have given me a new existence; and though from the light in which I now stand, you may deem me incapable of gratitude, yet can I not help de-

elaring that you have this night secured one true friend.—Friendship I am unworthy to arrogate; for friendship cannot be betwixt such different spirits, but well-wisher and slave I will call myself.—I will not burden you longer with my presence, but remember the last words you may ever hear from me, perchance, the last from any one competent to advise you on such a subject—hasten hence!—flee to Aggur,—and tarry not. The magician's soul is overcharged with rancouring impatience for thy life, and there is nothing which he would not do to glut his vengeance—many of his most active emissaries are in quest of thee,—so flee, and be circumspect.—God protects thy innocence.”

Having said this, the feigned pilgrim who had now somewhat recruited his strength, and bandaged the gash in his arm, withdrew slowly and feebly along the road they had previously traversed amicably together.

When Alraschid was left alone he more particularly canvassed what had just befallen him,—the dangers he had that day previously undergone, and the important changes which was thereby occasioned in his future views had during the whole of that long and dismal day harrowed his mind with conflicting pangs; and when he had sought sleep, that certain panacea of woe, he was thus abruptly hurried into a peril as imminent as any of those which had so suddenly torn him away from home and the hearts he loved. The feelings (however directed) when long and tensely acted upon, must change or snap like the overbended bough; his, lapsed imperceptibly from contemplating his own misfortunes to the adoration of God, who had safely delivered him from such a continuity of troubles. He threw himself on his knees, and forgetting aught of earth, poured forth aloud the grateful overflowings of a burdened heart to that Being, who unseen, unknown, preserves and blesses what he has willed and fabricated.

Toil-laden he then sought repose, but fearful of Runjeet's return, or being found by any of Omar's crew, he

first took the precaution of hiding himself in a thick patch of high withered grass which afforded perfect concealment. He soon fell asleep, and it was not till the sun's rays beat fervently on his temples that he awoke. On doing so he briskly resumed his dreary and solitary route. Little more than a couple of hours' walking brought him to the town of Aggur, which was distant about ten miles, and he inquired of one of the shopkeepers in the principal bazaar after Abdulatiff. This person told him there was no wealthy or respectable resident of that name in the place save the Rajah, and that he was then out on a sporting expedition in the neighbouring country. This intelligence at first startled our hero, and pulling forth the letter which he had never yet examined, he, to his surprise discovered it was superscribed to the Rajah of Aggur. As the shopkeeper further said that Abdulatiff was expected to return that same night, Alraschid, having first bathed and dressed, sallied forth to survey the town, and afterwards repair to the Omrah's residence.

Aggur is a very sweet place ; it is situated partly in a delightfully wooded valley, and partly on a small eminence, at the foot of which stretches an inconsiderable lake, which bounded on all sides by gentle acclivities, forms a gracefully delicate curve. Its widest end near the town is confined by an extensive mound or embankment which causes one to imagine the sheet of water to have been formed artificially, though such is not the case. Numerous ghauts or flights of long and massive steps descend on this side to its margin, for the accommodation of the inhabitants, and these are shaded by lofty tamarind and umbrageous peeples trees. On one of the banks stands a crumbling ruin, now nothing save the gigantic relics of departed grandeur.—This was Abdulatiff's fortress.

It was a large and irregular collection of buildings enclosed by a high wall composed of massive and compact masonry. The large portal fronted the lake, and a cause-

way led gently down to its brink where was placed a small mosque, which is still standing, though much dilapidated. It was near this our traveller seated himself, and after scrutinizing the romantic appearance of the castle and surrounding scenery, he wiled away the listlessness of time, and thwarted the miserable reminiscence of things that were past by watching the gnarled backed alligator, as he slowly drifted like a black knotted tree across the lake, or the unwieldy turtle basking placidly in the departing sun-beams. His notice was however soon attracted by the appearance of a numerous cavalcade filing round the lake. This was the Rajah and his train.

There is always something strikingly pompous in eastern spectacles, but on the present occasion there was an enchantment thrown over it from the beauty of its locality. The sun was just setting, and that part of the heavens was one vivid mass of inimitable crimson which faded gradually into a rich fringe of purple; above, was a curtain of purest blue, which grew more intense as it extended, whilst the several hills glittered like mighty torches, with the sun's departing rays, which slanted along their brows; the slightly undulating ripples meanwhile quivered on one small part of the lake in splendour, bright as the panoply of a thousand warriors gathered for battle before the strife has bedimmed their sheen. First, some horsemen gaudily dressed in blue and red striped jackets with scarfs of the same glaring colours, galloped furiously forward, clearing the way by causing their coursers to turn and curvet, and make a great noise. These were followed by a few others mounted on dromedaries, which were taught to trot pretty fast, though with a very ungainly appearance. They were caparisoned in a showy manner, and had numerous little bells attached to their trappings, which caused an incessant tinkling; they also carried a couple of huge kettle-drums fastened to their humps, behind which was seated the performers who alternately sent

forth a noisy peal, and then clattered loudly the titles, glory, and praises of their masters ; nor was this all these important functionaries had to discharge : behind each of them was fixed a long bamboo, to which was attached an equally long streamer, and displaying this to the utmost advantage, demanded a still further share of their dexterity. .

Directly after these heralds followed a well mounted body of retainers armed with spears, matchlocks, bows, sabres, and other weapons ; and amongst them were interspersed bearers of flags and banners. Next came a crowd of elephants, which carried some of the chief's friends and principal domestics, and behind was his own one, covered with a magnificent "jool" (or cloth) richly embroidered with gold, and which was surmounted by a gilt howdah of elegant manufacture.

Abdulatiff was seated cross-legged on a cushion of red velvet, and around him were a multitude of silver stick bearers, pennon flourishers, fiddlers, tom tom beaters, and others with long unwieldy brass horns, which ever and anon sent forth discordant blasts, each musician playing a tune of his own without the slightest regard of his brother performers. After this tumultuous assemblage, followed a string of sporting elephants, led Arab horses, men with dogs in leashes, or trained cheetas,* and many others carrying fowling pieces, boar spears, bows, sheafs of arrows, and various sporting implements. The whole was closed by a second body of well-armed horsemen who brought up the rear, without any pretensions to order. Some of them singing very cheerfully.

The effect of this pageantry winding round the Aggur lake would have been interesting enough, though fantas-

* The cheeta is a sort of miniature tiger, very fierce, yet capable of being taught to hunt. Like hawks they must be kept hooded, and brought thus into the field. On being shown their prey, they dart after it with great velocity, and seldom fail of catching it. A failure however renders them uselessly sullen.

tical to a foreigner, but to our traveller, who perceived nothing ludicrous in the scene, it was naturally impressive. The procession now reached the castle gate, and Alraschid soon found himself in the middle of the throng. On the Omrah's alighting, the whole gang of troopers and followers of every degree set up a deafening shout, accompanied with many prostrations; the horns emitted sundry shrill, piercing, and protracted yells, which fancy might have taken for the shrieks of some distressed spirit of the winds, and the cat-gut community rasped their respective solos more hideously than before. When Abdulatiff had fairly entered, all these various concomitants jostled in without ceremony, and amongst them our hero, who was literally swept into the castle by the flood of menials and retainers. He was not long in the large open square, in which the narrow passage of ingress terminated, before the crowd melted away like snow, and he quickly found himself solitary, every one save himself having some destination or duty to perform, and that with alacrity.

He was standing with his arms folded; uncertain what to do, when a young trooper came up and demanded his name and business. This he civilly told, stating likewise that he was charged with a letter to his master.

"The Rajah," replied the dependent, "goes invariably at this hour to the bath, nor will he afterwards see any one on business, but if you particularly desire that the paper should reach him this evening, I may be able to assist you."

"Many thanks," replied Alraschid, "for your courtesy, but I was enjoined to present the letter with mine own hands, and cannot therefore profit further by your kindness than telling me whether Ulluddeen is still employed as a hurkaru by your master?"

"Surely is he," answered the other, "as pleasant and cheerful a young fellow as is about the town, if you choose I will point out his dwelling."

Accordingly Alraschid having expressed his acknow-

ledgments, the trooper led the way to a cluster of cottages which were huddled around the Rajah's stately residence as if clinging to it for protection.

We need not dwell upon the particulars of a meeting which surprised as much as it delighted the hurkaru. Although three years had elapsed since their short casual acquaintance, they had often thought of each other, and their friendship though dormant had lost none of its warmth by absence. How much had Alraschid to recount of what had befallen him since they parted! A great part of the night was spent in relating his adventures and the observations his narrative elicited, for Ulluddeen's existence had been a very monotonous one, diversified only by some forays and rencounters against bands of predatory Mahrattas.

Next morning Alraschid was to be introduced to the Rajah, though not without considerable difficulty and delay, for Ulluddeen was forced in the first place to acquaint a certain superior member of the household, that a youth was in the castle with a letter to be presented personally, and then this personage as requested told it to another more consequential personage, which other personage passed the important information to his immediate superior personage till at last it reached the ears of a dignified functionary of the Nabob's establishment—this was the commander or Jemidar (as he was styled) of his personal guard, who finally intimated the same to his master.

Abdulatif first inquired whence and from whom it came, and being informed from Shaik Ibrahim of Ougien, he sent immediately for the bearer with much eagerness. On receiving this summons Alraschid was conducted by one of the ushers, across a large paved court in which a fountain was bubbling, towards a wide flight of steps which they ascended, and entered a long hall crowded with soldiers, servants, and people craving an audience; through this multitude they squeezed, and gained another

smaller chamber, in which presided the Rajah's buxy (or paymaster) who also acted as head steward.

The paymaster was well attended by clerks and assistants squatted on carpets of broad red and blue stripes with numerous legers and account books lying about, and he himself a corpulent aged person sat a little exalted above his inferiors in a sort of shallow pulpit, portioning out various tasks and revising their labours. They proceeded from hence through a short passage lined with silver sticked attendants to the audience hall which was beautifully adorned with painted imitations of mosaic work, of flowers and leaves mixed with silver ornaments. At the further end and on an unostentatious (guddy) or throne sat the Omrah ; he was encircled by a company of petty Pindaree leaders, head men of villages, and others of different pursuits, with whom he had been transacting business, and receiving reports.

He was masticating beetel nut very sedulously, and on either side of him stood an elegantly dressed boy who carefully drove away the flies with a silver handled (chamur) ; behind him was another, who with a punkah fanned him incessantly, an operation which the closeness and heat of the chamber rendered almost indispensable. The cares and concerns of the surrounding throng could pretty well have been divined by their faces ; one might be seen with downcast eyes and troubled look who had evidently come for the purpose of petitioning against extortion ; and another quitting the hall with a profound salam and more gleeful countenance, who had perhaps just been invested with some authority which he would in all probability abuse by perpetrating cruelty and injustice ; here stood a sturdy soldier, the leader of some locust host of hirelings, awaiting but Abdulatiff's orders to sally forth against any of his enemies and rebel vassals ; and next him a poor timid agriculturist, trembling at the augustness of the assembly into which by giving away his last rupee he had managed to get an entrance, and yet anxious to complain against this very warrior,

perchance, for having pillaged his hut or driven away his cattle.

The Rajah was about forty, tall and stout; yet his appearance bespoke activity, his features which had been handsome, were exceedingly dark, occasioned in a great measure by the sporting expeditions of which he was passionately fond. He had a grave, reserved air, and in transacting business was remarkable for such a want of loquaciousness as to approach taciturnity, but his eye was on the contrary ceaselessly eloquent; so expressive indeed was it that his old attendants seldom required a verbal answer, and never a reproof; one glance was universally intelligible; these peculiarities of character had slightly stamped his features with a gloominess which however had nothing in it sour or forbidding,—a misty cloud, mantling by stealth the moon, not unfrequently directs attention to that luminary which might otherwise have escaped our contemplation.

Thus Abdulatiff's appearance, besides commanding notice, prepossessed all around him with an idea of dignity, checked levity or freedom, and caused him ever to stand in the eyes of his dependants as the nobleman and master.

The Rajah was generally speaking a favourite with his subjects who at this period were little better than a band of predatory villains. Irreproachably upright, he was likewise inexorably merciless in dispensing justice, and punishment was the sure consequence of his indignation. In these times of blood and rapine, and in that part of Hindustan such qualities were in a ruler shining, nay indispensable, for the crimes of a Mahratta community were only to be curbed by firm and summary retribution.

To this rigour we may therefore attribute the comparatively peaceful state of his small territory, for excepting when some Pindaree chieftain bent on distant foray and accompanied by his numerous robbers, chanced to tra-

verse his district with steps of licentious ravage, other instances of gross injustice were uncommon, and these when discovered never escaped their merited reward. He was himself a rare instance in the east of being incorruptible ; no bribery, no consideration, could swerve his judgments, and yet strange as it may seem, this integrity of Abdulatif's was in many instances of little use to his subjects, for every one of his head officers being as venal and avaricious as they were crafty, a suppliant to ensure success would frequently, whether right or wrong, obtain this end by bringing them over to his interest as effectually as if he had purchased the good-will of the Omrah himself. Such is the character of the Aggur Rajah to whom our hero was now presented.

Alraschid having made a low reverence three times successively, placed in his hands the letter of Shaik Ibrahim, and then drew back respectfully.

The Omrah attentively perused it, and on finishing the letter exclaimed :

"Blessed be the holy and benignant father Ibrahim ! —My young friend," continued he, "this communication chiefly concerns yourself ; I never yet refused Ibrahim a favour ; say, what are your intentions, and how I can assist you ?"

"Let me first endeavour," answered the youth, "to thank you for this kindness to one whom misfortunes have driven into exile."

"I know your whole story," replied Abdulatif, pointing to the letter, "and know how to appreciate the authenticity of my information ; but, my son, have you no inclination towards any particular pursuit ?—have you a predilection for arms ?—or for sporting ?—or perhaps your mind delights in graver matters, and may be bent on business of more studious application !"

"Illustrious patron !" replied Alraschid, "I am equally inexperienced in all you have mentioned, but since urged to make a choice, what can I prefer to the honour of

wielding a weapon in defence of your rights and the advancement of your glory?"

"Good, good!" exclaimed the Rajah, "you are a lad of spirit and I augur well of your success. Jeebun!" continued he, addressing the Jemidar of his guard, "take care of this young man; see him instantly furnished with everything he requires; do you hear?—I say, pay him particular attention, Jeebun!"

The Jemidar, who was an old portly jolly fellow assumed a look of profound attention, and with a conge expressed obedience to this injunction.

Abdulatiff's thoughts were now taken up by other business, and Jeebun having given his new recruit a hint to follow him, they left the hall with the customary ceremonies. No sooner were they clear of the several crowded chambers than the lusty captain commenced interrogating Alraschid with much good nature, as to whom he was, and whence he came; in reply to which he gave him an outline of his story, which must have proved excessively interesting if he had comprehended it. But Jeebun was never gifted with mental endowments; he had entered the Rajah's service as a common spearsman, and for upwards of twenty years discharged his duty with unimpeachable honesty, and bravery; Abdulatiff as a reward for this long fidelity and zeal raised him to the command of those retainers who officiated as his body guard,—a post he had ever since held.

Jeebun was as notorious for his good temper and proneness for good cheer as for his honesty, but equally so for his stupidity. In order therefore to understand anything that was in the smallest degree extraordinary or intricate, he was accustomed to have it repeated over to him at the least three times, and then by a considerable cogitative effort he could partly comprehend it; four times accordingly did he interrupt our lover in the outset of his narration, and before he had nearly finished, cut him short altogether by saying:

"Come, I see your history is a long one and very

wonderful, but we will repair to my house, and after getting some dinner, we will hear the rest of it over a pipe."

Alraschid though somewhat nettled at the small attention paid to his story, gladly acquiesced in this hospitable proposal.

Having however convoyed our readers thus far in companionship with the son of Ajimut, we hope they will now pardon our flying off at a tangent to other personages.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Thus of their evils as they did discourse,
 And each did other much bewaile and mone,
 Loe where the villaine selfe, their sorrows source
 Came to the cave, and rolling thence the stone
 Which wont to stop the mouth thereof, that none
 Might issue forth, came rudely rushing in.”

FAERY QUEEN, CANTO VII.

THE dwarf, after Alraschid's release, retired to his apartments inspired with all the furious passions of his evil disposition : to be baffled, outwitted by a young girl, tortured his pride, but when he reflected that an enemy and rival, and above all that a secret of vital importance had been wrested from him, he became nearly mad, giving vent to loud though unheard imprecations.

He remained thus shut up a long time revolving within himself plans of dismal atrocity, when with one of those sudden impulses which characterized all his actions, he dived down the subterraneous passage, and proceeded to the chamber in which were practised his enchantments.

Steeled as was Omar in iniquity he felt an uncertain horror as he entered this place for the first time after it had been polluted by a mother's murder. His lamp appeared to burn more wanly, and each flickering sallow thread fell as if purposely with conscious precision on the wide bloody stains which nearly covered the floor. His long skinny fingers trembled as he placed the light upon the ground, and involuntarily he placed it as far as possible from the damning witnesses of his crime.

At this instant the dreary stillness was broken by a screech owl's hooting over the ruined well. But every

weakness in the magician's nature, nervous or imaginative, was soon dispelled by amazement, for the dim light which now showed every part of the murky cave assured him that the object, which his eyes durst not at first seek for—was gone—the body had disappeared.

On being assured of this, he stood for a minute or two as if bereft of all breath and motion. There, his mother had lain a pulseless corpse, and there was her heart blood still encrusting the white sand she had herself strewn, and there even lay her silver headed staff, blood clotted with her expiring clutch; but where was the corpse?

He would at that moment have given half—perchance all—the wealth he possessed to have seen her contorted limbs and features lying before him.

"Can it be?" exclaimed he, "that any one in the castle knows this chamber!—and unless so, how could she have been removed! but if a stranger, the son of old Ajimut, can intrude upon a privacy I thought secure, why should there not be others who possess the secret!"

Having partly ejaculated and partly muttered these words, he sat down on a trunk, and for awhile with his head resting upon his breast remained brooding over his gloomy doubts and reflections; then starting up he opened the trunk which contained a miscellaneous assemblage of things, amongst which was the black dress he had so rapidly assumed when he strove to murder Al-raschid, and taking thence a couple of rockets he discharged them successively from the well into the breathless air; after this he extinguished his light, replaced studiously the piece of carved painted wood which concealed the entry; and having ascended from the well paced anxiously a stripe of smoothest turf over which some of the thickest trees projected their massive branches. He had not perambulated this spot above a few minutes before three persons enveloped, and in a measure concealed, by large brown blankets wrapped round their bodies as shawls, drew near and saluted him;

these were some of his infernal ministers—men entirely devoted to his will, and impressed with a firm belief in his supernatural acquirements, each of these wretches had others under their respective command which they employed in matters of inferior importance, but when anything of especial malignity was required, they took it under their own personal superintendence.

The murder of Alraschid was one principal reason for their being summoned thus hastily, and two of these principal assassins, one of whom was Runjeet undertook to destroy him; the others received instructions for a different but no less lawless occupation, which shall presently be narrated. From the abject homage approaching nearly to that kind of adoration which the Parsees are said to pay to Ormuz, or the spirit of evil, this trio seemed perfectly convinced of Omar's being something more than human; and truly his strange appearance, manners, knowledge, and actions formed sufficient grounds for a superstitious reverence. After receiving their several directions the party withdrew, and the magician on seeing them fairly gone, descended quickly into his vault, and proceeded from thence to his private apartments within the castle.

When he had regained this retreat, into which no sun-beam ever penetrated, he passed the remainder of the night in parading with irregular pace, his chamber; twice had he replenished his silver cresset, when he was unexpectedly aroused from brooding over gloomy plans and speculations by a certain tap at the door. He started. It was the first time for years any one had ventured to visit him there uninvited; soon, however, recollecting himself, he thrust aside a bundle of papers which lay upon a low ottoman, and without speaking, withdrew a bolt and chain which secured the door, and threw it open. It was his uncle who had demanded entrance;—Omar frowned, but spake not, and awaited his errand without making a sign of recognition or welcome.

“Nephew,” said Selim with great agitation, “excuse

me if I have intruded on your privacy; I wish to acquaint you of something important;—but . . .” and he stopped as if fearful of having angered his relative by such an untimely visit.

The dwarf made no reply, but pointed to a couch, and his uncle afraid of betraying either temerity or suspicion, entered tremblingly into an apartment of his own castle which he had never before durst approach. His nephew immediately barred the door, and turning towards the Omrah with an expression of savageness intended for gravity, demanded his business.

“My business,” replied Selim, “is to tell you . . . but, in the first place, I beg you will attach no blame to me.”

“Well, what is it?” asked Omar snappishly. “My hours are valuable; to all beings Time should be precious where there is no Eternity.”

“I have come then,” continued the Rajah, “to acquaint you that the youth,—the prisoner has escaped; unaccountably escaped. He can be found no where.”—During the pause which succeeded, his nephew was so taken up with what was passing in his own mind as to return no answer.

“Escaped!” at length exclaimed he, darting a look at Selim, which frightened him. “Impossible! unless you yourself have given him liberty.”

“By the head of our Prophet,” returned his uncle, “I was ignorant of the fact till within these few minutes; on awakening I missed the keys,—I gave the alarm instantly, and found the iron tower empty; the turret door was wide open.”

“And is it thus?” interrupted Omar, bounding across the room, his eyes glistening and his contracted breast heaving with emotion so admirably feigned as to rival reality; whilst every muscle of his features was distended with assumed agitation. “Is it thus I am fated to be again duped?—Who but thou, false, unworthy, treacherous relative could have played me thus foully?—

Who, but thyself possesses a master key to the tower of iron?—Who but thyself durst, durst, I say, have permitted my mother's murderer to escape?—Thou, Selim, art the real author of this bloody deed; the son of Ajimut I now see, has been but thy guilty accomplice and tool."

Here the dwarf threw himself headlong on the floor, in a feigned paroxysm of distress. This was the very accusation Selim had dreaded; dreaded, because circumstances rendered it necessary for him to be wary in his conduct towards Omar, and he was unable to explain how Alraschid had escaped. No person but himself had a key to the tower in which he was imprisoned, and he never entrusted it in other hands; he had placed it that night by his bed-side, but found it gone after awakening from a short slumber. This fact he knew well, the magician would not easily credit, and how to establish his innocence strangely perplexed him. In vain did he protest, and solemnly imprecate divine vengeance on his own head, and upon his whole generation if he had been guilty of falsehood.

His nephew's suspicions were apparently unappeasable. "Say no more! say no more!" exclaimed Omar, "thinkest thou after my father's hapless fate, I pay respect to these empty oaths and imprecations?—away, cruel, remorseless relative, leave me to myself, and to my tears!"

"Never," replied his uncle, "till I have convinced you of my entire ignorance of the villain's escape, till lately, and my being wholly unconcerned in it."

"What validity can there be in your words," answered the magician, seemingly a little mollified, "have you not always dealt treacherously by me?—your daughter Selim,—have I not twice been deceived respecting her,—and now—"

"She shall be your's," answered the Omrah hurriedly—"shall—must be your's—take her, but believe me guiltless of your mother's death;—that is to say if she

is murdered. I pray to God it may be otherwise. At all events, I am innocent of all participation or knowledge of the deed. I call Heaven to witness, I call on the ear of Heaven to hear this my solemn asseveration."

"I may believe you," replied his nephew, "when I possess your daughter;—but," continued he with a look of fiendish suspicion—"not till then."

"Be it so, my son," answered the Omrah, raising the misshapen goblin from the floor, and placing him gently on the couch; "I will let my actions speak for me:—one proof of my sincerity shall now be given you,—if the youthful villain has escaped us for the present, vengeance shall however fall heavily on his family. Ajimut is rich; go, confiscate his goods; his daughter, if it please you, and property are in your hands; I will sustain the whole responsibility."

"It shall be strictly executed," muttered Omar, "'tis but a moiety of just revenge," and opening the door he motioned his relative out of the apartment, feigning himself quite overcome with affliction; and Selim after a warm embrace equally assumed, quitted the place with greater satisfaction than he had entered it.

Immediately after this short interview, the dwarf left his apartments by the private avenue, and winded his way along the river. The wildness and irregularity of his steps would have bespoke to any eye, if eye there had been to watch him,—the perturbation of his spirit: by fits he would hurry on so as almost to run; and then as suddenly stopping short, gaze with an intent yet vacant look upon the gurgling waters. It was about the same time that our hero was drawing near Shaik Ibrahim's mosque, and the dappled dawn was melting into morn. For a short space he glared upon the stream, and upon that very part of it in which his enemy and rival had been as he once thought for ever immersed. It was a sort of nook, over which high and thickly wooded banks impended, and at the same time pent in the current, which thus meeting resistance in its otherwise

placid course fumed and bubbled in noisy petulance around the opposing obstacles. This formerly noticed eddy caused the magician's heart to yearn by the poignant train of thoughts which it recalled. Had any one have fallen on him at that hour, and in such circumstances, with his unearthly features rendered more hideous from the ghastly hue which watchfulness and agitation had given them, and his thin parched lip gnawed till the blood betrayed the excoriations, he would if superstitious have believed, or if not so, at least imagined him one of those malignant demons of night with which India is every where believed to abound, taking abruptly his departure at the approach of morning. Breaking away as if forcibly from the tissue of his gloomy contemplation, he pursued his route in a manner less flighty towards the cottage of Ajimut.

When within about half a mile of it, a party of four men emerged from a thicket, and waited the coming up of Omar, whose approach they had seemingly been awaiting. This band was composed of the most ruffian-looking wretches that were ever beheld. From hard labour and constant exposure to a burning sun, they were of a hue much darker than the generality of natives; and besides being scantily clad, their sinewy limbs betokened by the cramped appearance of the muscles, and the rough scurviness of the skin, that hardships and arduous employments were to them familiar. Their turbans were composed of numerous narrow twisted piles of cotton cloth, which had once been white,—these by their multifarious folds formed a covering very much resembling a coiled cord, through which their black straight and lank hair penetrated in many places. Their mustachios which were exuberant, added to the savageness of appearance, and the eyes of each individual glistened with that undescribable glow-worm kind of animation, which too well betokened a free use of an intoxicating mastic called bang, and which though chiefly abstracted from a species of wild hemp,

is of course frequently mixed with other more powerful stimulants and narcotics. The four were all in a similar habit, being wrapped up in brown cotton cloths, dyed so as to imitate shawls, from beneath which the handles of scymitars clumsily formed of solid iron peeped forth. The chief or most consequential personage of this wretched set, was one of the three individuals we formerly mentioned as obeying the rocket summons.

Omar was received by them with every demonstration of awe and respectful obedience, but to their salam he paid no courtesy. Without even stopping, and merely saying, "Right, Boodoo, you are punctual," he beckoned them to follow, and advanced straight towards Ajimut's abode. This was soon gained, and by the time the party had reached the small thicket, which concealed it from view, the sun had fully arisen.

Ajimut, like most easterns, was not only an early but a regularly early riser; he was up, and having performed his morning orisons and ablutions, was vainly endeavouring to apply himself to religious meditation. But the poor old man's heart had been nearly broken, by the unexpected and unaccountable disappearance of his son, and though his wife and daughter employed all their skill and persuasion to dispel his fears, their efforts were unavailing.

Alraschid's manners and reserved demeanour had long baffled his ingenuity, and raised vague suspicions that he was engaged in something or other which he durst not communicate; and when his being absent for a whole night was added to this, (and that for the first time) and without any intimation of such an intention, his apprehensions were much strengthened:—in short Ajimut would not be comforted.

"Yes," said he to his daughter, whom he had for some time addressed, "it has been truly said that happiness exists only in the mind,—the mind is its own Paradise or Gehanah. And is it not deplorable, that those objects which are dearest to our bosoms, should

render us miserable by being withdrawn?—As much so, nay, too often more than they blessed us?—as the balmy air we breathe and flutter in if taken away, turns all to death and stillness. When we grow gray, we become more sensible that life is like a silver chalice, resplendent as the sun-beams during the morning of our little span, and filled then with pleasant nectar, though sometimes infused with gall. But alas! such is the fiat of an inscrutable Omnipotence; the goblet becomes gradually tarnished,—dim—wormwood prevails,—till at length ebon is the cup;—and bitter the abundant draught.

“This spot lovely as it is;—those trees gracefully as they tower in the vanity of foliage which I have seen worn out and renewed for thirty years; delicious as may be those flowers which by your care surround us with sweetness and beauty; they are to me but as a sculptured sepulchre reminding me of friends, of whom nothing but remembrance here remains. Vainly do they display flauntingly their captivating allurements; they fall on a palled or deadened sense;—it is as a loud sonorous gong changed into lead. Strike it however hard, will it produce any clangour?”

“Father,” replied Rhada, “I am unable to discourse on such difficult subjects, but have I not heard you a hundred times say, that man never shines in so bright a light, never rises so heroically above his imperfect nature, as when he is dumb before misfortune, and patient in the severity of affliction?—He then, I have often heard you inculcate, throws off his mortal trammels, and by imitating that Providence who can feel neither misfortune nor affliction vindicates his own divine origin. Where now, dearest father, is your fortitude?—Has not my brother courage and sense enough to protect himself for a single night? Oh banish unnecessary solicitude.—I could find many excuses for his absence.”

“My child,” replied Ajimut, “your sense as much exceeds your years, as it does the generality of your sex,—and I ought to blush when I confess that you

have given your father a moral lesson, as much by example as precept. I am weak to give way to what you think are unfounded fears, but, my Rhada, an aged parent is ever thus weak.—What I chiefly dread is, that your brother has formed some attachment in Selim's family, and should this prove true, and be discovered, it would then require all our firmness to bear up under the terrible results."

"Your son," returned Rhada, "has too generous a heart to wrong any one; he has too sacred a filial affection to endanger by his actions your happiness; he is too much of a brother, a fond brother, to subject me to affliction."

"You are right," answered the old man, "I do my son injustice; but see, yonder are some persons advancing through the wood; it must be Alraschid!—How often are our repinings as groundless as impious in the eyes of Heaven!—another such trial as this I might however sustain with more becoming fortitude."

As he spoke these words the dwarf and his party drew nigh. A soft, silvery gauze-like haze, which the yet slanting sun-beams were busily extracting from tree and flower, together with an abundance of leafy shrubs, prevented their persons being accurately scrutinized, till on emerging from this densest part of the grove, a nearer approach proclaimed to Ajimut his mistake as to his son; and Rhada perceiving by one short glance that all were strangers, veiled herself with much expedition, and fled hastily into the house. The old man's heart fell within him, on being assured of his disappointment, yet he received these visitors with a grave politeness, and was about to inquire their early business, when the magician prevented his intentions by exclaiming, "Hah! what art thou so grey a fox, and yet so green in cunning, as to remain basking out of thy earth, when the hounds are after thee?"

Ajimut's tongue was tied by the hideous external semblance of Omar; but when his discordant voice

grated on his ears, it actually banished from his mind all thoughts of Alraschid.

"Aged villain!" continued the dwarf, sideling nearer to him, and pluming his thin wiry mustachio, with a grin which showed all his teeth, "Parent of an accursed son!"

"What of him?" demanded Ajimut anxiously.

"No good," answered Omar, "as is unlikely there should ever come out of evil."

"Unfeeling and strange looking being!" replied Ajimut, "trifle not with a father's sensibility!—Tell me, I entreat thee in the name of mercy, tell me, has any misfortune befallen him?"

"Yes," answered Omar, "punishment, a condign punishment; not any misfortune has overtaken him;—the same as what is in store for thyself, thou, over-ripe iniquity! but why do I thus uselessly temporize?—We have a commission, hoary miser, and false subject as thou art, from the Omrah, confiscating thy wealth;—so produce thy money—thy bags—and no unnecessary trouble!"—Having said this, the dwarf gave a signal to one of his crew, who seized the old man, and proceeded to bind his hands with a cord.

"Lawless robbers!" exclaimed Ajimut struggling with the wretch who was using him thus roughly, "By what authority am I thus treated? of what misdemeanour am I proved guilty, that I am thus plundered and insulted?"

"Old man," answered the principal of the freebooters, "we act by authority of his highness the Rajah; 'tis therefore absurd and imprudent for you to gainsay his decree. Without further importunity therefore, let me advise you to deliver up with as good grace as possible, all the cash and valuables of different kinds concealed in that comfortable looking cottage; and if you have yet one tusk remaining in those yellow chaps for which you have a fondness, be discreet in the wagging of your tongue, otherwise its safety may be put in jeopardy."

"And is this," demanded Ajimut, "the mandate of one who ought to be the dispenser and the guardian of justice? Had I not previously known by bitter instances Selim's true character, I should have doubted not that you were thieves on your own account. Nor am I certain but ye are!—It however matters little, the sword is ever more decisive than the tongue, of persuasion—even though Virtue herself should be the suppliant. To attempt withholding what I have, were, as you say folly;—take it, 'tis what I have honestly earned, and laid by for future want—the garnered corn for the winter of my days,—but first, I conjure ye,—tell me of my son; if he live; or be detained by you in order to wrench more easily from me my possessions. Speak, you shall not obtain less easily your desires by easing an aged heart before it ceases throbbing!"

"Peace, babbling dotard!" interrupted Omar harshly, "think'st thou we came here to prate?—what have we to do with your son? our business regards your hoard—so disclose—unless you prefer some previous torment."

"Mysterious and misshapen villain!" exclaimed the now exasperated Ajimut, with a scowl which ill became his mild venerable features, "even now thou declaredst that my son had suffered a condign punishment, and with the second breath affirmest, we know nothing of him.—The tortured worm will turn—the expiring wretch, however feeble, will strive to scare away the horrid vultures that lacerate his flesh before their time;—I will endeavour to repel such heartless wolves as ye are, by the only means of vengeance in my power; not a single cowry* of mine shall you carry hence,—no, not though my life should fall a sacrifice, unless you in the first place acquaint me of the fate of Alraschid."

"If the worthlessness of your cub has not gone without its just reward, most reverend Sir," replied Omar, "he is now expiating in another world the atrocities

* Small shell, lowest denomination of coin.

which I trust he has smarted for in this. Thine, thou foul-tongued grey beard, must now be atoned for!" and with these words he advanced and seized the cord with which the old man's hands were fastened.

During this conference, Ajimut had been seated on a small clay constructed seat, close to the porch of his house, and around it were two or three little flower plots fenced neatly by miniature walls of about a foot high, decorated with turrets and domes in imitation of eastern architecture, and composed of the same cheap material. They were kept scrupulously clean and tidy, and not one unsightly withered leaf was ever permitted to remain within their precincts. Over these the magician intentionally perhaps passed, and as intentionally trampled down the flowers and frail boundaries by which they were encircled. At sight of this wanton brutality, their victim heaved a sigh, but his feelings were too deeply otherwise engrossed to permit any observation to escape him.

"You threaten me with torments," said Ajimut in a melancholy manner, yet assuming a sternness of tone incompatible with the benignity of his temper; and assumed purposely to vindicate the manliness of his nature against a womanish burst of tears, which, despite of every exertion, exuded from his half shut eye-lids, and the further he proceeded, the harsher became his voice—the more abundant his tears. "But can you inflict severer suffering than you have done?—Age may deaden the sense, it seldom deadens affection. In pity answer me.—Behold at your feet," (said he kneeling,) "one who never yet knelt to any being but his God! one, whose rights of rank and blood ought ever to have excluded him from such a debasement! I kneel before ye, I implore ye, tell me if my son lives?"

The only reply Omar condescended to make to this appeal was half a thrust, half a blow, accompanied by these words:—"Have we not told you we believe and hope that your son is in Gehanna? Why pester us fur-

ther concerning him?—Perhaps you imagine we are to be put off our purpose?—Come, produce thy bags!—thou save-all! thy bags!” and he commenced dragging him forcibly towards the door.

“Mysterious miscreant!” exclaimed the old father, extricating himself from the bonds by which he had carelessly been bound, “if my innocent child be murdered, as my heart whispers he is, ye, from your dank inexplicable words, have done the deed;—thou! thou! I should say hadst murdered him;”—and he seized Omar by the throat with a force, greatly superior to what his years would have bespoken. Doubtless, the passion by which he was excited, endowed him with that fleeting and intense muscular strength peculiar to insanity, and with this brief nervousness did he compress the dwarf’s throat in such a manner, as must have strangled him, had the paroxysm of excitement lasted. “Restore me my son, restore me my beloved son!” cried he, wildly, and accompanying his words with a closer compression.

“Quit thy hold!” said Omar, at first inarticulately. “Quit thy hold!” repeated he again more distinctly. “Quit thy hold!” reiterated he, loudly and hideously, whilst his eyes scintillated with fury; the swords of his satellites were instantly unsheathed, but Ajimut’s strength had fled; his hand still held the magician’s throat, but it was more as a support to his own tottering frame, than an aggression;—this failing in strength however availed him nothing, and one of the remorseless wretch’s scymitars was raised to smite his hoary head, but another weapon had anticipated the blow. It was too late; the magician’s dagger had twice drunk Ajimut’s heart-blood. He staggered (to use an expression which may convey what we wish to express) steadily,—gazed on his assassin with a glassy steadfast gaze, and without word, groan, sigh, or shiver, fell and expired. A piercing shriek from within the house immediately succeeded. All was now silent,—the hardened band, familiar as they

were to guilt in its most detestable garb, beheld this consummation of crime with noiseless surprise, and it was sometime before the magician himself could find utterance.

"Hah!" exclaimed he, (his usual exclamation) gasping as if for breath, and equally from a faint twinge of conscience, "thou superannuated fool! If I have not satisfied thy vain curiosity, I have done thee a better turn, by sending thee from earth to keep company with thy son; and yet," continued he, addressing his crew in a more conciliatory manner, "it was badly done—rashly done—to remove his useless spirit, before we had forced from him a revelation of his riches."

He had scarcely said this, before three or four females rushed frantically from the house, and raising Ajimut's lifeless head gave clamorous vent to their sorrow. No less loud were they against the perpetrators of the murder. After vainly using many means to resuscitate the body, and as uselessly staunching the stabs from which no blood now flowed, they carefully carried the corpse into the house, without any hinderance, or even being observed by Omar. He, covered with gore, was engaged in cleansing his dagger from its gilding, by thrusting it repeatedly into the sod, and when he had finished this satisfactorily, he stalked in after the group of wailers, wiping unconcernedly his weapon. They were too much engaged to observe him; but this was not long the case, no more than it was the only cruelty and indignity of which they were destined to be exposed.

"Woman!" exclaimed Omar, fiercely, as he dragged, by her grey locks, the frantic wife of Ajimut, from her husband's body, out of the cottage, whilst his hand, which she had been pressing to her breast, fell supinely on the floor; "think not," said he, "that we are triflers, who will waste further time in this unprofitable manner;" and he still held her hair in his grasp, relaxing however in some degree its torturing tenseness, as he, after a short pause, said,—“Show us at once where your hus-

band's gold is hidden, unless you wish to see the very foundations of your house razed ; or desire to accompany the cunning miser's spirit into another world."

"Oh, if ye are men, and have the hearts of men!" exclaimed Rhada, throwing herself at the magician's feet, and seconding her petition with all the eloquence of her lovely eyes, suffused with tears—"spare my mother!—torture not one whose inoffensive virtues equal her years and infirmities."

Nadira also wildly besought mercy, declaring her ignorance of where her late husband's valuables were deposited,—but the hapless widow was pleading before those who never felt its influence.

The dwarf, rendered more cruel from impatience, now seized roughly her clasped shrivelled hands, and binding round her fingers a piece of cord, he relentlessly twisted it till the very blood spirted from beneath the nails. Meanwhile, with infuriated features, and a voice which nearly drowned the shrieks of his agonized victim, he reiterated his demand. Her distracted daughter was vainly attempting forcibly to rescue her parent, when a blow from an unseen hand felled the magician to the earth.

CHAPTER X.

"They fyred the house in many a place,
 The fyre flew up on hye:
 Alas! then cryed fair Alice,
 I se we here shall dye."

OLD BALLAD.

THE blow which prostrated the magician was dispensed by the formidable bludgeon of Buccas, the fakier, who, with newly painted features and appropriately dusted body, stood forth a courageous and almost contemptuous champion of the poor females.

"Shades of my ancestors!" exclaimed he,—"whose dogs are ye, that nose carrion thus early!—Wretches! release that poor creature, or this stick shall so knead your skulls, as may incapacitate your own mothers from knowing ye! merciless villains!"—A short stupor, occasioned by the unceremonious treatment of their leader, and the dictatorial bearing of Buccas, prevented the three desperadoes from immediately falling upon him. This they however did as soon as he had finished speaking, and not without being fully expected on his part.

The uncommon personal vigour of the mendicant was less remarkable than his agility, and the confidence he felt in both, raised his natural daring into a perfect ignorance of fear. He had now, it must be confessed, from the vast odds against him, a fitting opportunity of astonishing his enemies by every kind of feat, stratagem, and quick resource, which his own preservation rendered imperatively strenuous. First, therefore, making a rapid retreat, grasping his weapon by its extreme end, and puckering up a face which would in every base prove half the battle, he lay crouched, cat-like, ready to spring

on the first who should present a proper opportunity. Not finding this, he bounded off like a huge flea, and spun round them, before they well knew his intentions, with such a number of prodigious noises, postures, and flourishings of his club, as both daunted and amazed them. Midst all this uproar and rapidity of motion, the fakier's keen black eye was watching its time, and at length darting like a kite upon the most advanced of the three, a blow across the temple brained him as effectually as if a musket ball had pierced him. Cowardice and cruelty are invariably allied, and the two remaining ruffians, seeing the indomitable bravery and determination of their opponent, as well as the fate of their companion, betook themselves precipitately to flight, leaving their senseless master a certain victim.

The victorious fakier's first care was to unbind the female's mangled hands, and whilst thus engaged and assisted by Rhada, a volume of smoke which became gradually more dense, issued from the windows of the cottage, through which a flash flickered at intervals. To extinguish the fire now demanded Buccas' immediate exertions, but it was too late. The hissing and crackling of the, by this time, insuperable element, proclaimed exultingly its supremacy; and in a moment more the whole fabric was one vivid blaze, which, gradually lessening, the charred rafters and masses of burnt thatch tumbled promiscuously, midst innumerable sparks, succeeded by a cloud of dust and ashes. The party gazed for awhile, without speaking, on this new calamity, and without attempting to preserve anything from destruction. This silence was however soon followed by a bitterer burst of lamentation.

"Infamous being!" exclaimed the fakier, who, with a melancholy intension, had been watching the rapid ascendancy of the flames, whilst he at the same time turned towards the place of carnage, grasping sternly his stick,—“it is the duty of every man to prevent if possible the recurrence of so much misery!” From these

expressions, his intentions towards Omar could not be misinterpreted, but although the corpse of the captain of the bandits lay cold and stiffening in its gore, the magician's was not there.

Astonished at this unexpected disappearance, Buccas explored the shrubberies and thickets of the garden, till feelings of humanity towards the unprotected family of Ajimut induced him to desist from the search. On his return he found Rhada supporting her mother, who was slowly tottering from the little verdant grass plot which begirt the black smoky embers of what had so lately been the abode of peace, happiness, and love.

"Your father, Rhada," said she, bestowing a last look upon the ruin, "has had a goodly funeral pile;—but come," continued she, tearing herself away as forcibly as possible, "come, let us hasten hence my child,—here all our happiness lies buried,—our once happy hearth is desolate."

The daughter made no reply, but through the opening of her veil and tears, she for the last time gazed upon the shrubs and flowers she had so long fostered, and regarded as dependent friends. They then left for ever a beloved paradise;—houseless—friendless—knowing not whither to proceed, nor where to lay their heads. Buccas followed, at times lost in thought, from which he ever and anon snatched himself, from a wish to comfort them, though seldom attended to.

Could mankind unfold the mysterious scroll of futurity, and ponder over pending evils, how few would survive for their completion, were it not also necessarily willed that we must live for their accomplishment!

Nothing better substantiates, that, to an indefinite extent, we are the weak worms of circumstance and habit, than the diverse effects produced on different persons by those fiat of Omnipotence which we call misfortune. The magnitude of misery is often enhanced by its prophetic shadow, as the moan of the nearing storm is often more dreadful than its roar—and evils, of which to

dream even the probability of their occurrence would freeze the blood, prove mitigated by the unsuspectedness of their visitation. So a limb when twisted forcibly from its trunk has been known not to bleed, whilst a much lesser injury would have caused a mortal hemorrhage. Such was it with respect to the family of Ajimut, for the greatness of their distress, afforded a negative alleviation. As a bark, when ocean is raging with ungoverned fury, feels not at intervals the destroying storm, from the very profundity of the gulf into which she slides from the liquid mountains that encompass her.

Plunged in supremest grief, and hopelessness—with every tenderest sympathy of the heart ruthlessly cancelled, Nadira and her daughter wandered forth without any immediate object save that of quitting the disconsolate scene of their sufferings. A frail unfriended widow and orphan in search of this world's charity!—this world's chilly commiseration!

“We will look for Alraschid,” exclaimed Nadira, “he is now our sole hope and succour.”

“Alas!” answered Rhada, “and whither shall we seek him?—we know not where he is.”

This unremembered truth was the only remaining pang left to be inflicted on the poor mother, and wringing frantically her hands, she loudly bemoaned her hapless situation. Rhada, overwhelmed with grief at having thus thoughtlessly added fresh incitement to her parent's affliction, checked her own tears from anxiety to dispel her's. All was, however, unavailing.

At this instant the attentive Buccas, who had all along followed at a respectful distance, drew near, and with much earnestness of manner said: “In the name of your blessed Prophet, where do you intend going?—Know you not that yonder is the lair of that tiger, whose fall pangs you have felt so sadly?—and are you so ignorant of the implacable ferocity of his nature as to conceive that the accursed thirst of his vengeance is assuaged?—

Confide in my honour,—confide in my good intentions —if I be not at present so able as I am willing to assist and defend you,—yet your injuries shall be hereafter deeply revenged. Permit me then to conduct you if possible to some place of refuge.—At all events, leave, I beseech you, this dangerous place !”

There was something in the fakier's air so nobly honourable, so frankly courteous, that any female in difficulties would have been induced to accept of his assistance ; and in their present circumstances no proffered kindness was from motives of false delicacy to be despised, the more especially from one who had already proved himself brave in defence of weakness. Accordingly, without scruple, they placed themselves entirely under his guidance, and he at once recommended a path perfectly different from the track they had as yet followed. Without molestation, or seeing any one, they passed through one or two extensive groves composed of the loftiest trees, and which afforded shelter from the now vertical rays of the sun ;—they then entered on an open plain, and after an hour's journeying across it, reached a small dirty cottage, which resembled a large ant hill on the desert. In this their guide advised them to conceal themselves, whilst he, after regaining his horse, which was fastened to a tree near the ruins of their cottage, would set off with all despatch for Ougien, and order some sort of conveyance for their accommodation.

The tenant of this hut was a woman of low cast, who was busy grinding corn with a small hand-mill composed of two flat stones. She received, however, her guests with respectful kindness ; and stretching out a mat on the floor, pressed them to rest, while she brought some water. This was considerably cooled by having been kept in a porous earthen jar, and our travellers felt much revived by a refreshment of which they stood so much in need. This poor Hindoo's hospitality compensated for the wretched accommodation of her hovel, which had

not even cleanliness to render it supportable. The low crooked mud walls were cracked and rent in a hundred places, and the scanty thatch had numerous crevices through which the sun-beams perforated, displaying the cloud of dust with which its atmosphere was charged. A small bundle of cotton clothes, a hookah of common burnt clay, a leta or a small brass pot, with a flat iron pan, and the forementioned mat and mill, constituted her whole household furniture.

They had remained here a considerable time anxiously expecting their friend's return, when a few horsemen came in sight. These approached from the same wood which they themselves had lately traversed, and seemed making directly for the cottage, though at a very leisurely pace. They were six in number, but the dust prevented the anxious eyes of Rhada from discerning whether their guide was of the party. "It cannot be him," said she, "for besides the distance to Ougien, he promised to bring us some conveyance,"—and this observation was confirmed by the undecisive motions of the party, which, after loitering a few minutes, turned off into a path which left the hut, above three hundred yards to the westward. As there was no window in the dwelling, the horsemen were out of sight as soon as they had passed the door. Another long hour now ebbed away, and without any signs of the fakier, when voices were heard close to the cottage.

"'Tis he at last!" said Rhada, her eyes glistening with a satisfaction she could not conceal. The conversation without, though not yet intelligible, was carried on in a loud enough manner; for, after a little nearer approach, the following dialogue was distinctly heard, at least by Rhada and her hostess, for Nadira was deaf.

"A plague on your silly tongues! did I not maintain all along it was out of all possibility for them to reach half the distance in so short a time?—no, no,—depend upon it they were all the while near the river, and we

shall now have some hours' work before we discover their track."

"Well, well," answered another, "we only asserted according to the best of our judgments, yet for my own part I believe I saw some persons moving in this direction; the dust and haze may however have deceived us."

"Dust and haze!" retorted the other, scoffingly, "goats or sheep! but let us see if there is any one in here who may direct us. Holloa!"

The intentions of those who now proved to be pursuers, instead of friends, excited Rhada in an unusual degree to protect her parents. Deaf as was Nadira, she with the rapidity of lightning acquainted her by a few signs of their danger, and then as rapidly and briefly requested—implored the Hindoo's protection.

This kind creature, without returning either her or the party any reply, instantly seized the bundle of clothes previously mentioned, and emptying them with incredible quickness, threw them over the persons of her guests in such a manner as to conceal them entirely, they having shrunk into the darkest corner of the cottage. She then went out to answer the new comers.

"Holloa!" continued one of the party, who had now wheeled in front of the door, "what! no one within?—or all asleep?—Oh, at last—(seeing the woman)—well, 'tis unlikely we shall obtain much information here, since I take it your eyes have been shut for the last three hours."

"Sir," replied the Hindoo, "I have too much to do, to permit me to sleep at so unseasonable a time."

"Ah! well said, so you have not been asleep. Have you then, my good woman, seen many persons pass this way?"

"I have seen several," answered the Hindoo, half evasively.

"Indeed! how long ago?" demanded eagerly the leader.

"About day-break."

"And none since then?"

"None, Sir, save yourselves could have passed this house without my observing them, as I have sat for the last two hours at the door grinding corn, and looking for my husband."

"Just so," exclaimed the other with an expression of disappointment and rage. "Did I not say so?—this is your dust and haze; a plague on such senseless jabberers! but," continued he with a bitter acerbity which bespoke his vexation; "I'll give you enough of thus deceiving me, you lying rascals, I will; not a mother's son shall quit saddle till we discover the cunning little devils. Dowlat, get me a light."

Dowlat instantly alighted to perform this mandate.

"Hold!" exclaimed the man of authority, "said I not but now that not one of you should quit saddle?—mount!—I will serve myself."

So saying he cast himself from his horse, threw the rein to Dowlat, and entered the hut to light the pipe he held in his hand: a hundred times did the Hindoo curse in her heart the small earthen jar of charcoal which had thus led to the discovery of her guests.

Nadira, who could not see for the clothes, and was too deaf to overhear what was passing, was ignorant of the soldier's entrance; but Rhada trembled so violently, as to assure her their danger was extreme. After lighting his pipe, the commander, whom we have already introduced by his own peculiar name of Ramjohnny, withdrew. Had a coiled serpent been sleeping on the damsel's breast, she could not have felt more relieved by the monster's departure, than did Rhada by hearing him retire. A sudden and almost total want of light denoted his exit, as it had done his entrance.

A few seconds afterwards the following brief colloquy was heard outside:

"And where may you, half-fledged imps, have sprung from?" demanded Ramjohnny.

"We were out, Sir," answered the tremulous voice of a boy, "seeking fire wood."

"You had done more wisely methinks," replied the soldier, "judging from your half-starved looks, if in the first place you had searched for something to fill your bellies; but did you meet with any one during your foraging expedition?—did you," demanded he gruffly, "see any strangers?"

The boys who were already terrified at sight of so formidable looking a party, did not feel their courage in any degree renovated by the harsh voice and un-conciliatory manner of their interrogator; accordingly without any answer or ceremony, they ran into the cottage.

"Come here, you little riff raffs," exclaimed the horseman, "what are the low cast numbskulls frightened for?"

"Get out with you, and answer the gentleman civilly?" said their mother bestowing on either of them a hearty cuff, accompanied with a quantum of vituperation. Nevertheless, the elder lad refused to move, and his brother remained near him blubbering.

"Come here, monkey," continued Ramjohnny in a more soothing manner, suspecting, from the lad's behaviour, he was influenced by some other motive than timidity. "Come, don't be frightened at nothing, but like a good boy, answer what I bid you," and he stretched forth his hand towards the younger.

This he however avoided with evident dismay and starting towards the corner in which the females were concealed, fell over them. The clothes were instantly forced down; a slight scream succeeded; the boy rushed out of the hut as if he had seen a ghost; and the fugitives appeared before the eyes of the astonished Ramjohnny. It were hard to say whether his joy exceeded his surprise.

"Allah defend me!" ejaculated he, "this is indeed miraculous! Is it possible I should have twice entered

this without discovering you?—what an owl I must be ! thanks, many thanks thou craven little kitten, for this good turn. Come forth, ladies ; and be not frightened, for from us you shall meet with no harsh usage.”

Hesitation was unavailing, and the pair quitted with unsuppressed sobs, the hut, concealing their faces with their robes. A shout of exultation arose from the troopers at this unexpected confirmation of their opinions, and a momentary mortification on finding his anger and taunts recoiling on himself, was the only damp to Ramjohnny’s otherwise supreme satisfaction.

The charitable Hindoo, however, by no means eluded his ire ; and a thousand quaint devices of language and fancy were employed by him to convey the extreme malignity of his imprecations. These were not directed solely against herself, but every branch of her generation, the souls of her deceased ancestors included, and the only exception made by him was in favour of that blessed hurrumzada,* whose chicken-heartedness had preserved his immortal part from that utter darkness to which all his lineage were eternally predestined.

When Ramjohnny had disposed of his lengthened curse, and digested the disagreeable shout, and accompanying galling cachinnation of his men, his face and temper regained their customary placidity ; just as a thunder-storm restores the atmosphere to its former balmy freshness. He now caused two of his troopers to dismount, and after a few arrangements, placed his prisoners in their places, and the party moved slowly across the plain.

They now entered the very woods through which they had so lately been conducted, and shortly afterwards the Rajah’s stately residence appeared through the trees. They drew directly towards this, and at every step which brought them nearer its high embattled walls, (all hope of rescue being gone), Rhada’s heart beat more faintly

* Blackguard.

and irregularly. Fancy conjured up all the known and vague cruelties of the wretch into whose hands she would ere long be consigned by his myrmidons, and the maiden would have fallen off her horse with weakness and excitement, had she not been caught and upheld by one of those on foot.

Ramjohnny appeared to compassionate his prisoners, much more even than the natural politeness of his manners warranted, and he said everything he could devise to raise their spirits and banish their fears.

"If you have any commiseration," said Nadira, addressing herself chiefly to Ramjohnny, and raising to him and each one whose eyes she could catch her clasped hands, "carry us not to the castle!—we are innocent creatures, and oh! treat us not with undeserved harshness—for we are defenceless—harmless!—at least"—continued the old parent, exerting all her powers of persuasion,—“if a victim be for some unknown reason necessary, take me alone to meet the indignation of your master—but spare my child—spare the sole remnant of my family, and suffer not her to become yet more miserable!”

"My good lady," answered Ramjohnny, who could not help showing he was somewhat affected by this appeal.

"You know little of the Rajah's disposition, if you suppose I durst in any degree prove perfidious. "My head," said he with a smile, "rests but on one neck, and I assure you it would not remain there long if he found me guilty of any dereliction. But why so disconsolate?—from what has already happened to you, Selim's intentions were, I should imagine, kind; for assuredly it is more likely he feels for your sufferings, than that he has an inclination to aggravate them, if it be possible."

"He cannot add to them," replied Rhada.

"I believe not," returned Ramjohnny, "and rather

trust he will endeavour to compensate for your misfortunes ; have a stout heart therefore."

As he uttered these words they arrived at a massive portal in the outer circumventing wall of the castle, the custody of which was entrusted to a numerous well appointed guard. Through this they passed into an extensive court, which surrounded the castle on every side, save that of the zenannah where it was cut off by a high wall in which was a strong door garnished with iron knobs. Ramjohnny knocked pretty loudly at this, and it was promptly opened by a well dressed servant, into whose care he consigned his prisoners.

This personage now conducted them through various passages and some smaller courts, till they reached a wide marble stair case. This they ascended and found themselves in a long gallery into which a number of doors opened. One of those which was locked their attendant opened, and on entering they found themselves in a spacious apartment furnished with the most costly articles ; two or three other apartments opened into this, all equally well fitted up, and the whole forming a magnificent suite of chambers.

"I must now leave you," said the attendant civilly saluting them, "you appear excited and stand in need of quiet and repose ; after ordering some servants to see you are in want of nothing, I will acquaint the Rajah of your arrival."

Being thus left to themselves, Rhada commenced a hundred different surmises as to Selim's intentions, and though her mother said nothing, both were too suspicious of his character to believe him actuated by any charitable, or at least disinterested motive. Fortunate it is for frail humanity that the mind, in however deplorable circumstances we may be situated, has still a tenure on happiness by its very hankering after it ; so indisputable, therefore, is that trite truism, that man is never wholly miserable, while there exists a hope of better things, and it is no despicable blessing that there are few

such extreme cases from which this balmy comforter is excluded ; but how often is hope nothing else than a voluntary blinding of our eyes to the harsh dictates of reason, when an unbiassed exercise of our judgments would annul her operations ? how gladly do we often question the infallibility of our conclusions ?—the divine boon of reason then appears to us depreciated, it seems an infliction rather than a blessing ;—we unconsciously yearn after utter ignorance of all futurity, and with a bitter feeling of prostrated pride, imagine those beings, devoid of reflection, more incomparably happy.

With regard to Rhada ; every trifling attention and kind word from their captors, the servant, and the magnificent accommodations afforded them, had gradually infused more favourable expectations as to their destiny, till one black suspicion arose which destroyed them at a swoop, effacing every brightening portion of the prospect, as an unheralded hurricane eclipses the sun emerging from dissolving clouds. It was this, that she had been brought there for the purpose of being shut up for life—a slave in the Rajah's haram. With a gush of tears the affrighted girl was stating these apprehensions to her mother when the door opened and Selim entered.

Ajmut's daughter felt every nerve quake as the Omrah approached, for the splendour of his dress left little doubt as to his identity. Selim was not much above forty, but ambitious projects and the ceaseless sapping of many cares had prematurely graved age upon his brow ; his raven dark eye had an unsettled roll and frequent flashing which bespoke the restlessness of his mind, and his mouth was continually working ; the general expression of his features was, however, on the whole intellectual and pleasing, and very far from hinting a heart capable of perpetrating the many cruelties he was accused of. As he leisurely drew near, his fine but emaciated countenance exhibited an unchanging gloom which time had indelibly fixed upon them ; by some it would have been called sadness,—by others sourness.

"You are the wife of Ajimut?" said he shortly, whilst as he seated himself on the ottoman, his eye glanced impatiently for an answer.

"My mother—your excellency," faltered Rhada, "is very deaf—she is—was his wife—now his widow,"—and here she could not restrain her tears.

"What!" cried Selim, "so suddenly made a widow? how came it so?"

"He was murdered," replied Rhada, "murdered by wretches who for the sake of gold would commit any atrocity—look at the lacerated hands of my mother which testify the torments she underwent."

"Hah!" exclaimed the Omrah to himself—"then must the wretch have as usual overstepped the furthest limits of his powers. Fiend! my consent was given to punish—not to exterminate."

The tone in which this was spoken expressed pity, though not a word was overheard, and the maiden assuming some courage even from so indistinct an expression of regret, exclaimed with earnestness.

"O Sir! we have cruelly and undeservedly been made miserable; we are beggars; we have beheld a parent, and husband murdered, and our house a shapeless heap of ashes; what then is now left us but to implore your justice and compassion?—not only are we guiltless, but ignorant why we can have incurred your displeasure."

"And think ye!" replied the Rajah with a voice which was audible even to Nadira, and a fierceness of manner which made her daughter's spirit shrink aghast, "think ye I am still so green in this world's subtilty and hypocrisy as to be trepanned by the honied falsities of such baubles as women?—and ye know not, (continued he scornfully) a reason for the bitter retribution which has overtaken your family?—think ye then that the eye of Providence can be hood-winked by your unnecessary secrecy?—or that your flagitious stripling may murder my relatives without entailing on himself the vengeance of God and man?"

"Alraschid!" exclaimed both females without saying a word more, from surprise and dismay.

"Yes," replied the Omrah, sternly. "His hands are red, with the blood of a widow," laying a strong emphasis on the words;—"my brother's widow!—and was not therefore her son a fitting scourge in the hand of Heaven?—was not her son's revenge, but commensurate to his own loss—a father for a mother?"

"My son! my son!" shrieked Nadira.

"It is to learn what has become of him I now visit you," resumed Selim; "declare where he is concealed."

"Alraschid a murderer!" ejaculated Rhada, "then never an intentional one. I will lay down my life in defence of his honour."

"Your lives," answered the Rajah, with a contemptuous scowl, "are useful only to yourselves; it is the person of your brother we require and which must be delivered up; if innocent, he will then be able to clear himself. I charge you say, what became of him after escaping from the castle?"

To this, as may be imagined the girl could make no reply. After a considerable pause she however said:

"Sir, let me assure you, every word you have spoken relative to my brother is wholly inexplicable; you have pronounced him a murderer, and as having escaped from justice; but Alraschid's disposition was so gentle, and his character so unimpeachable that I am certain you are under a delusion."

"I cannot spare time," replied Selim, angrily, "to prove to you quite unnecessarily, that I am not mistaken—all I require from you is, what has become of Alraschid?"

"If," answered Rhada, "the Omrah will believe me to speak with the lips of truth, he may easily be satisfied, and permit his servants to depart, for my brother has been absent from us for the last two days, and we are as ignorant of his present destiny, as till this instant we were of his incredible depravity."

“Excellently said ! thou little smooth faced dissembler !” responded Selim, with a savage smile, by which his fury was alone restricted from bursting boisterously forth. “I calculated rightly the game you would play ; but—” continued he becoming more calm, “it were unnatural for you not to attempt shielding so near, though unworthy a relative. The motive I must respect. However,—” and his brow was again darkened by a squall of anger, “justice, and my interests, imperatively require the production of your brother, and suppose not ye shall be any serious barrier ! my clemency is equal to my indignation ; inform me where the criminal is concealed, and your cottage shall be rebuilt, and every damage compensated ; if not, words cannot describe the horrors which await you : tortures, thirst, hunger, chains, darkness ! everything, but death, which shall be deferred till it will be regarded as a boon.”

A pause now succeeded, the Rajah waiting a reply ; but the girl was far too terrified to speak.

“Am I to consider then ?” said Selim, “that my lenity is despised ? speak, caitiff, and tamper not with a temper, the asperity of which may agonize your souls !—speak !”—and he thrust forth his arm, though at the opposite side of the room, as if to grasp the maiden ; every vein of his hand being distended with its furious current almost to bursting.

Rhoda at last indistinctly stammered forth :

“We know nothing,”—and awaited what she considered her doom with feelings too painful to dwell upon.

Selim spoke not a word, and had Rhoda not been too excited to observe, she might have seen him almost strangled by the intensity of ungovernable passion and disappointment. He clapped loudly his hands, and a few attendants instantly broke into the apartment ; to them he pointed out the females without speaking, and

hurried away with a step, and manner which well declared the raging hell within him.

"Bless me, ladies!" said the servant who had formerly so civilly received them, "what can you have said or done to enrage the Rajah?—I never before saw him so angry."

Obtaining however no answer to this finishing sort of address, he pettishly exerted his authority over the other officious persons who pressed around.

"Withdraw, knaves," said he, pompously, "for I am sure the ladies will render your assistance quite unnecessary, by voluntarily following me; ladies," continued he turning to them, "the Omrah's orders must be obeyed by his slaves without murmuring, and it is his high pleasure that you should accompany me."

Without any reply Rhada and her mother, accordingly, followed this consequential servant, who carried in his hands a couple of large rusty keys. Descending the marble stairs they crossed a different court from the one at entering, and reached the foot of a turret the door of which was opened to receive them. This they ascended and found themselves before the very grating of Alraschid's prison, into which they were of course shut, less unceremoniously certainly than he was, but with much less chance of regaining their freedom.

CHAPTER XI.

“Thy sword within the scabbard keep,
And let mankind agree ;
Better the world were fast asleep,
Than kept awake by thee.”

DRYDEN.

WHILST such severe and unjust afflictions were bruising Alraschid's family, he was passing listlessly his time without any inducement to activity, and almost without any occupation. The lolling attendance on Abdulatiff, burnishing his armour, or exercising his charger, constituted his most important duties, and he began seriously to sicken of a life which was so monotonous and devoid of excitement.

The lawless depredatory character of the neighbouring community had certainly rendered necessary sundry forays, but the goddess Fortune had always ordained such expeditions should devolve exclusively on his other comrades. It was not therefore with any prolonged feelings of displeasure that he was interrupted in composing a letter for father Ibrahim full of tender inquiries after Noorun and his parents, by the sudden and boisterous entrance of Ulluddeen fully accoutred.

“Up,” exclaimed he, “and put by all these scribbling nick nackeries!—you must arm yourself before you can make a dozen winks, for we are all ordered off instantly for some tremendous long journey—God knows how long, beyond the Chumbul.”

“The order,” replied Alraschid, “must be indeed a sudden one, for I saw our captain but an hour ago, who said nothing of the matter; and surely for such a distant

expedition we would require days instead of hours to make preparations."

"That may be—that may be—" said the hurkaru, "but you will find that even minutes will be grudged us. I cannot spare time for words; get yourself ready as quickly as possible before Jeebun finds you—and meanwhile I will pack up any necessaries I can lay my hands on."

With this he bustled out of the room, and every doubt was instantly dispelled from Alraschid's mind, by the clamour of voices—trampling of horses and screeching of clarions which immediately succeeded—tearing up therefore his nearly finished letter into a number of very minute fragments, he set about arming himself with an alacrity which nearly approached the portion of time allotted by his companion.

First he slung over his shoulder a loaded matchlock of very handsome workmanship, whilst at the same time he thrust into his girdle a ponderous powder horn, and coil of cotton, saturated with salt petre, used for discharging this fire arm; he next bound a red scarf over his head fastening it securely under his chin, in order to preserve his turban from being lost during a charge. He had moreover just finished the girding on his sabre when he discovered all his exertions to appear ready were thrown away, for Jeebun entering the apartment greeted him at once with such a curse as we shall not transcribe, for not being already at his post. To this wrathful ebullition the youngster made no reply but snatching up his spear hastened away for his steed.

We should not however forget to mention the great, perhaps the only reason for the worthy Jemidor's crustiness; no one could perhaps be more particular than this staunch veteran in acting up to the very letter of his master's instructions; and in sooth it was this invariable punctuality joined to inflexible fidelity which had elevated his condition. Now Jeebun's orders to gallop off nearly two hundred miles in defence of a little village

belonging to his master's friend the Rajah of Malava, were most explicitly urgent, and although his dinner was within three minutes of being ready, he could not, would not tarry an instant. It was this disagreeable reflection of losing his dinner which caused him not only to anathematise his men without plea or distinction, but to imprecate the bitterest vengeance on those worthless miscreants, who had thus indirectly robbed him of a meal which he was in every way capacitated to have enjoyed.

The men were soon all mounted, and despite the heat of a September sun, winding round the lake at a rapid pace and amidst a dense cloud of dust, which by the rapidity of its progression resembled in no small degree such a pillar as is carried frequently along by the resistless suction of a whirlwind, they then directed their course nearly due north across the open country. Such a barren houseless uninteresting tract could not be expected to prove very fruitful in adventure, and they rode nearly fifty miles without pulling bridle or seeing half a dozen human beings. This distance in so sultry a clime may appear to us very considerable, but our astonishment would be greatly diminished were we aware of the almost incredible fatigue many of the sorriest looking nags in the east are in the constant habit of undergoing.

For a couple of hours they halted at a miserable hamlet where with difficulty they obtained a sufficient quantity of different kinds of grain to feed their horses, without drawing from their own stores ; fortunately there was an abundance of excellent water. After this refreshment, they again resumed their journey at a steady pace, and seventy good miles had been accomplished by the time they reached the spot chosen for the night's encampment. The horses were now carefully picquetted around a large bowly, and some fine spreading trees, each having his hind legs fastened by ropes to a strong peg driven into the ground, a precaution which the

natural viciousness of these beasts renders quite indispensable.

The half famished Jemidar then lost not a moment in setting his men the excellent example of replenishing their bellies, and a score of little fires were in as many minutes brightly blazing beneath the huge outstretched branches, each trooper being taken up in cooking or looking after the cooking of whatever provisions he had brought. This meal despatched, they condensed themselves into different little parties, some smoking and conversing, whilst others of more riotous disposition, were loudly singing and accompanying themselves with a little drum or tom tom which all the baggage they were otherwise forced to encumber themselves with, could not induce them to leave behind.

In much the same manner four days were spent by them before they reached that part of the prince's territory, which was visited with all the licentiousness of some unknown marauders. But on the fifth an hour's hard and early-riding brought them within sight of that village to which they had been directed.

"May I perish bodily!" exclaimed Jeebun, "if the pariar knaves have not fired the village!—come, dig in your spurs, and let us if possible overtake them."

The Jemidar's surmises, which were occasioned by observing gusts of smoke curling heavily over the indistinctly seen cottages, were proved to be correct by a nearer approach, for it lay a confused smouldering heap of ashes. The sickening sights which now gradually unfolded themselves to the party, appalled our young soldier, who was unaccustomed to them, though they did not appear much to affect the greater number of his comrades.

"This is indeed misery!" exclaimed he to himself, as he surveyed with a chilly shuddering the present perfection of horrible desolation, and certainly it was perfect in every respect though not on an extensive scale, for the place itself was small, and could only be charac-

terized as a jumbling together of some despicable mud tenements.

Yet did these same lowly resting places once protect and concentrate the same ties and affections of our nature as the gorgeousness of palaces,—and perchance with truer purity and fervour. Numerous corpses were strewn near the blackened ruins pierced by the lances or slashed by the scymitars of their wanton murderers. Over some of them hung sons, sires, or daughters, uselessly sorrowing; whilst others lay unregarded, unwept for, yet not the less easily. Here might be seen some shrivelled matron, a haggard picture of distress, raking amongst the still reeking and crackling embers for some half consumed piece of furniture, muttering deep denunciations against the authors of such destruction, and here a bereaved mother hung tearfully over the incinnerated corpses of her children gazing with clasped hands and heaving breast on their changeless features, unable to persuade herself of the dismal reality of her losses.

A little removed from the road which passed directly through the hamlet, lay extended on a rude pallet a young man whose handsome features were falling into ashes from a fire less rapid but as sure as that which had prostrated his abode—fever. Near his head sat a lovely girl his mistress, who was unremitting in her endeavours to protect him from the scorching delirium-laden sun-beams, as well as to drive off the sprightly flies which pertinaciously buzzed about his parched lips as if conscious of a speedy prey. Ill fated maiden, thy tender assiduities, are as unavailing as man's imaginings! you are weakly warring against the decrees of a pitying Providence. Can you rejoin the golden chain to the earthly encumbrance from which it is now being slowly loosened? One short exclamation, half shriek, half wail, proclaimed to the party who were then passing, that her solace, her happiness, all were at an end.

"This is indeed misery!" reiterated Alraschid whilst a tear rolled down his cheek. "Is not this," continued

he addressing the hurkaru, "a splendid instance of woman's love and tenderness?—could we but now see that gentle creature's heart laid open, what a wild and wintry scene would it exhibit!—All the glittering joys with which hope and affection had studded her futurity at once harshly dismantled. The altar to which her love-belief was attached—overthrown. What consolation can she now have but that unwarming one of musing on vanished gladness! but such remembrances are like the desert blast, refreshing at first, then quickly burning, withering, poisoning!—"

"You are ever eloquent," replied Ulluddeen with a smile slightly contemptuous, "on love and the divine attributes of the sex; notions very different from what we generally hold. As for myself, I certainly am in a great degree untrammelled by those prejudices which cause us unjustly to regard women as slaves, or senseless toys; yet I by no means am such an idolater of them as you are."

"Whether or not I speak eloquently," answered his companion, "I know not; but that I do so sincerely I am certain. What were this our rugged and selfish nature without her sympathy? What were the hero victorious even to satiety?—or what even that nearest earthly approximation to spiritual beings, a virtuous sage, without woman's wo-wiling ministry? His happiness is as a sickly unreflected ray; his sorrow a torrid and painfully refracted one; his sickness is desolation; his death horror!"

"A truce with your ecstasies," exclaimed Ulluddeen, "for I am too old and subtle a logician on such topics, not to see you are prejudiced; that you are in love, I have been long aware; but now I see it is no ancle deep, no wading matter; you have been swimming for the last quarter of an hour, and that too I should say on your back from the conviction with which your arguments are fraught."

"You are right," replied Alraschid, thoughtlessly, "I

am in love deeper than metaphor can express ; yet call not that heavenly passion a prejudice ; and regret disdainfully on that account thoughts and feelings unaffectedly expressed."

"Be off with all this sugared sentiment ;" said his heart-sound friend, with a laugh, which even the grave disgusting objects around them could by no means bridle.—

"I will wrangle no longer, but grant everything you have, or rather what I suppose you can have to say. Nay, even if it was to the affirming women to be really angelic, not flesh and blood, but of a superior ethereal spiritual order of perfect beings—God bless the dear deities !—But let us by no means miss hearing what consolation our worthy and erudite captain, is dealing out gratis to yonder half-clad miserable crew."

So saying they spurred on to Jebun, who was some distance a-head. The small assemblage, over which towered the Jemidar's portly person, consisted altogether of men with a few naked boys ; they were huddled round a small heap of chattels, which had been secured from the conflagration,—most of which articles being of brass and other such less perishable substances, had survived this fiery ordeal. They were perfectly silent, and breathing images of apathy—or more correctly smoking ones, for the proportion were gravely enjoying their pipes which were lighted by the very charcoal of their roof trees. Such practical philosophy, on ruinous disasters, which it would have been rare to see theoretically endured or mollified, made a great impression even on Al-raschid, whose education and religion inculcated similar behaviour.

"Which way did the villains take?" demanded for the fourth time Jeebun, with considerable asperity of manner. Without returning any answer, the men first slightly shrugged their shoulders, and each afterwards dismissing a cloud of smoke from his crammed cheeks, pointed significantly to the westward. This was information sufficient, and the Jemidar ordered his troopers to follow

without losing time, what he designated the blood-thirsty swine of the Naggur sorceress. For by such he was sure the present atrocities had been committed. Another hour or so's desperate hard riding over a light, sandy, and almost dusty soil, on which, nevertheless, a scanty herbage was perceptible (such a greenish tint as even in the curling wave may be discerned, or as Shakspeare would say, a "tawney with an eye of green in't,") brought them to a thick wood.

This was almost entirely begirt with jungle, composed chiefly of a prickly shrub not unlike our wild sloe. Interspersed amongst this were patches of high coarse grass, which, though principally withered, rose to the height of eleven or twelve feet, and here and there a few borbaul trees, which have a sweet scented yellow flower, were scattered around, as if acting the part of tirailleurs in advance of the dense and mighty force behind them. Excepting by the roads which had been cut, the forest was impenetrable by man or any other animal than an elephant, and that powerful brute's strength would in many places have been useless from the countless trees which either choked each other outright, or entwined their arms in a thousand tortuous embraces. Briarens like the majestic banian tree,—the tree of trees,—stood like a forest Titan, whilst, rooted in some cleft of his innumerable pillars, some straight, and smooth cocoa nut tree rose pre-eminent over all.*

We will not however risk the reader's patience by anything further botanical, but add thus much: that if he can imagine a fastness of boughs such as we have mentioned, peopled by innumerable bright plumaged birds, all noisy, but not one a songster, and of which class in number and clatter, the (totas) or paroquets were conspicuous; a few cunning snakes coiled round some withered branch, (resembling themselves in colour) expectant of ensnaring some of these feathered fools;—a herd of

*This is no very uncommon *lusus natura* in some parts of India.

deer bounding gracefully past, seen for an instant, then for ever lost ;—myriads of monkeys chattering as if for life, and vaulting from tree to tree, as if they were prodigious bats ;—with perhaps the grunting of a wild boar, as with displayed tusks he forces himself through the brush wood. If he can fancy all this, he will then have an imperfect delineation of what no words can descriptively convey, but which at the same time is well worthy of being conceived.

Jeebun had not proceeded much more than a couple of hundred yards along the road which now permitted only three to ride abreast, when he abruptly reined in his charger, which of course made the whole body draw bridle. It was no glaring tiger nor furious buffalo, nor any other ruffian aristocrat of the wilderness, which caused the lusty leader to halt thus unexpectedly ; but the glancing of spears and corslets amongst the trees at no very great distance.

The Jemidar waited till all his men had lighted their matches, and prepared their various weapons ; he then led them steadily forward. Though voices were distinctly heard, and the glittering of arms as distinctly seen, yet were the enemy further off than had been supposed, for a short advance brought them to a small open piece of ground, on the further side of which were collected a more numerous body of horsemen than what Jeebun had the pride of directing. This did not in the slightest degree disconcert him, and he made his men file into line with praiseworthy alacrity. The other party who were taken somewhat by surprise were promptly mounted, and waiting but the order to commence the strife.

On the Jemidar's side, the signal was quickly given by his discharging his matchlock,—and now slaughter-loving Shivah was o'erhanging the scene, eagerly expecting a precious banquet ; and deeds might have been achieved in that sylvan arena worthy of being commemorated in a second *Maharabat*, had not a personage

who seemed to command the adverse party rushed boldly forward within a few paces of his opponents, and exclaimed with a loud authoritative voice, and commanding manner, "Stop!—what, shall we from blind and culpable hastiness spill perchance the blood of friends?"

"Who are ye?" demanded Jeebun sternly.

"And who do you suppose we are?" retorted the stranger in a composed, and placid accent which differed extremely from that he had previously assumed.

"Who?" answered the Jemidar snappishly, being made savage by his antagonist's perfect self-command. "Who!—but the plundering villains who have been disturbing the whole country, and have just laid yonder village in ruins."

"Or some other such rascals as those inhuman incendiaries, you should have said," replied the other with the utmost coolness,—“and then you had finished cleverly your compliment,—but, thank God,” continued he, “this most wonderful riddle can be resolved by a little prudence, and without the mutual hacking of our carcasses; are you all so blear-eyed as not to see the robbers of that ill-starred bustee (hamlet), or at least a select number of the gentlemen?—Look at yon trees, and say if we have not been beforehand in revenging so detestable a proceeding?”

Had all this been spoken in the Phenician dialect, it had been equally comprehended by the open mouth Jemidar. He however turned his eyes towards a knot of trees at some distance to which the other pointed, and perceiving them decorated with some score of human pendulums, which (as was twice repeated to him), was occasioned by their having been pursued and taken by this unknown person's troop, he saw a mistake had taken place; and sheathing his good Persian sabre, which was a well understood pacific fogle signal to his men, he addressed the officer (who had also satisfied his followers,) in a more respectful manner, requesting to be informed under whose banners he carried arms.

"We are soldiers, Sir," answered he abstractedly, "of Aurungzebe. Should you doubt our words, his signet which I have the honour to be entrusted with, will banish such suspicions,"—and he held forth a plain massive gold ring, in which was set a splendid amethyst, containing at full length in Persian, the titles of the Emperor. At sight of this, which was on his fore-finger, all present made a low obeisance, and Jeebun inwardly thanked his stars that he had so narrowly escaped attempting the life of one, who, by having such a gem in his keeping, must certainly either be of some consequence himself, or else charged with important business, from his bearing and appearance. The latter surmise appeared the better founded, though what business it could be which had brought him there, and moreover induced him to pursue and chastise so summarily the freebooters, the worthy captain could not with all his wit and cunning conjecture.

"Methinks," said the Jemidar, who perceived a well near the trees, on which were suspended the robbers, "this were no uncomfortable place to dine;—have you, Sir, any objection to join our mess?"

Although the stranger made no immediate reply to this civil invitation, there played on his boldly chiselled lips, and in his dark bright eye an expression that bespoke a pleasurable acceptance of the proffered hospitality; yet it bore moreover a contemptuous expression, if Jeebun had been sufficiently acute to have scrutinized it.

"You confer a signal favour on me," responded at length the officer, "and I will certainly avail myself of it."

"That means you will dine with us?" answered the captain, evidently a little at a loss.

"Yes," returned the stranger, transiently scowling, "I will eat with you. But," continued he, resuming his usual equanimity of manner, and bending slightly

yet gracefully his head, "you will for a few minutes excuse my absence."

Soon as he had withdrawn, the Jemidar took under his own personal superintendence the necessary preparations for dinner. Although disappointed as we once had seen him, of a nearly ready meal, Jeebun never permitted anything to interfere with meals when on service, and he had with invariable foresight ordered his servants to carry with them a plentiful stock of provisions and a few cooking implements, all of which were now put into customary requisition. "Like master like man," is a pithy though homely proverb; and its veracity was unequivocally displayed in this instance; for no sooner had the captain set the example of connorcowing (dining) than it was emulously imitated by the whole party. A hundred different fires were shortly kindled and cracking cheerfully, around which were seated as many jovial companions; and the horses, each of which was fastened to a different tree or peg, as we mentioned, on account of the savageness of their dispositions, were enjoying their gram, (a sort of vetch) throwing back their ears and tossing their heads, as if from a suspicion that there was a probability of its being purloined.

The Jemidar's repast which consisted of nothing but an immense quantity of highly seasoned curry, with a few cakes of maize flour, was now ready, and the impatience depicted on his countenance for his guest's appearance was almost distressing. At last the stranger made his appearance, and the curry being discussed, and ablutions duly performed, Jeebun unconscious, most assuredly of what his religious principles must otherwise have forbidden, circulated a pretty capacious gourd bottle of what he designated almond sherbet; which however on trial proved arrack of the best beads. This being handed to the stranger, he passed it by without tasting, nor could all the Jemidar's rhetoric—"just to try it,"—induce him to put it to his lips. Pipes were now lighted, and conversation ensued. We forgot to mention

that this party consisted only of Jeebun, his guest, Alraschid, and another favourite of the commander, of whom no mention need be made, as he has nothing to do with our story. His stupidity and gluttony were his only characteristics,—and it was most probably these qualities which had brought him into Jeebun's especial favour.

Precisely five minutes after dinner, the Jemidar, as was his immemorial custom, fell asleep,—snoringly asleep; the younger gormandiser sat silently dozing; and thus all the converse which continued to be carried on necessarily passed between Alraschid and the stranger. Albeit few words escaped his lips, yet was there so commanding and convincing an air in all he did say, as to impress Alraschid with feelings of respect almost reverential. Youth is ever prone to marvel at, and worship, whatsoever is removed from its usual observance, and although this might have partially accounted for our hero's attention towards a casual companion who was evidently of some importance, yet was there something so unusually peculiar in this individual's manners and turn of mind, as to require no other reasons for our young friend's wonder and admiration. From his being the leader of so gallant and gay a party, something eminently military in appearance might fairly be anticipated; and yet no one could have had much less martial semblance considering his situation. He was dressed in a suit of plain white muslin, scrupulously clean and neat, with a turban to correspond; and excepting for the sabre at his side, a light spear which was stuck into the turf within his reach, and a pair of brown boots, he might have passed for the most pacific of Shroffs or shop-keepers.

His personal appearance was by no means robust, but certainly indicated activity; but all considerations of bodily prowess were quickly dispelled by gazing on his expressive features. For then, a pair of well-formed fully defined lips, betwixt which and a somewhat too aquiline nose extended a thick wiry mustachio, and a black ever

burning eye—and a high expansive forehead declared to the most unpractised physiognomist a Herculean firmness of purpose, directed by no puny intellect. His age might have been guessed rather under than above fifty.

"No wonder," thought our hero, "that this man is a favourite of the emperor!"—After closely questioning Alraschid concerning his master's affairs in a manner which bordered upon cross examination, the stranger ended by abruptly asking whether he considered him as being sincerely religious.

"Sir," answered he not a little puzzled at such an unexpected interrogatory, "it were foolish presumption for me to attempt answering satisfactorily so difficult a question,—difficult to me, that have been but a few weeks enlisted in his ranks, and who can have no other reasons for pronouncing him exemplarily devout than the kindnesses he has conferred upon myself. As far as they warrant me, I hesitate not to pronounce him so, nor does popular report in any way detract from such a character."

"Then you have not been long with Abdulatiff?" replied the officer, and without waiting for any response he continued,—“in what situation I prithee, were you before becoming one of his retainers?”

"I was in no other situation," returned he with a sigh, "than that of a son in his father's house."

"And left it I suppose," rejoined his companion, "like a discontented fool; to follow fortune, and fall in with disappointment?"

"No!" exclaimed Alraschid, with energetic bitterness, "I left it, to escape a cruel and powerful tyrant's wrath! one, into whose heart justice or mercy never yet entered."

"Who was that, may I ask?" demanded the stranger.

"Selim of Ougien."

"Indeed," said the officer, betraying for the first time

anything like a symptom of interest, "Why, we have always heard that he is a worthy, loyal, and just man; and a more civil honest looking personage I remember not having ever seen, for I once saw him."

"The hyena, Sir, can laugh," replied Alraschid, "but perhaps I may have given too black a character of the Rajah (if it be possible). My misfortunes were however occasioned by the intermediate means of the most accursed of Dewtas, (demons) by which his palace is haunted."

"Let me hear the whole particulars of your story," said the officer, "and I will in return for such confidence give you the best advice, and consolation in my power."

Our hero who had no reason for keeping anything secret further than Noorun was concerned, gave his companion as succinct an account as possible of his adventures in the castle, and which led to his entering Abdulatiff's service.

"By the blessed Hossein," exclaimed the officer, who had listened to the narration with every show of attention, "this is indeed as pretty a shred of romance as I ever remember hearing. Could Schezerade possibly have known or imagined it, she would certainly for one night at least have saved her sister from the eccentric Sultan's barbarity. But," continued he, "my young friend, it appears to me that this Selim whom you villify so freely, has in no way acted cruelly or even harshly towards you, further than the very suspicious predicament in which I must say you were placed, fully justified, and that the dwarf, magician, or nephew of the Rajah (as I conceive he must be,) is the sole origin of your misfortunes, and most implacable of enemies. Against him therefore, should your indignation be directed. But what could induce you to approach and explore so narrowly the precincts of that generally shunned castle, more especially when you allow that from infancy

your mind was impressed with dark mysterious reports concerning it?"

"Whatever the circumstances may be," replied Alraschid, "which indirectly led to the few adventures I have told you; I will only say thus far concerning them, that they would not render my story more interesting or instructive. In a word, it was sheer curiosity which prompted me to descend the ruined well into which, as I told you, I had seen so unaccountable an apparition enter. If I have done injustice to the Omrah, with regard to his nephew (if such the magician be,) I cannot as you observe be wrong in expressing my revenge;—and by the light of heaven!—the first time that malign venomous reptile crosses my path—this"—laying his hand upon his sword.....

"What, Sir!" interrupted the stranger with a burst of passionate indignation, quite discordant with his customary cautious manner, "darest thou, Sir, tell me?"—and his eye glared as if he would forcibly have searched the youngster's heart,—“that you would unjustifiably assume to yourself the duties of judge and executioner?—Beware, young man, of giving loose to such passions, unworthy as they are lawless!—I say, beware. The wretch most crime-laden shall not be punished but by power legally conferred.—No! were he the veriest outcast from humanity! Time, however sluggishly he may seem, seldom fails to bring virtue and vice their merited rewards. I might now apply to yourself the question which I put concerning your master,—“*Are you really religious?*”

Alraschid, who never expected such a rebuke, sat for awhile silent from surprise, as much awed by the authority and earnestness with which his companion spoke. His feelings were however too rudely chafed to allow such animadversion and galling taunts, to pass without, what he conceived, a just retort.

"Sir!" said he, with marked asperity of manner, "I do not understand what business you have to take to

task thus inquisitorially my doings or intentions. From my seniors I always endeavour to put up with anything short of insult; yet I cannot help saying your interference is as unnecessary as it is discourteous."

To this carefully set, and scornfully delivered reproof, the stranger to his astonishment paid no attention. But taking out a small writing tablet, the binding of which (so to express ourselves) was of solid silver, he began to write.

Alraschid rose to leave him to himself, and the responsive snores of the now outstretched gluttons, when the soldier, shutting suddenly the tablets, said in a more conciliatory voice, "My son, stay;—what means this petulance? Is truth to be despised on account of her severity?—I am sure the good father Ibrahim would inculcate implicit submission to her dictates."

Alraschid, who had already felt ashamed at having taken such umbrage at his companion's advice, could not on hearing the name of Ibrahim refrain from expressing his sorrow at permitting his pride to master reason. Seating himself again, his first inquiry was, how he was aware that Ibrahim had been his instructor.

"Ibrahim's wisdom," replied the stranger, "has been a passport to the world for his name. Even princes have worshipped his intellect, and courted his acquaintance; Aurungzebe himself 'tis said has prized his friendship; whilst at Ougien I heard the reverend Shaik mention the names of many persons in the neighbourhood,—your father was one. He lives, if I mistake not, in a sweet secluded cottage on the Sipra?"

"Your surmise," answered Alraschid, "is correct. I prithee, how long may it be since you were there?"

As seemed the stranger's custom, he never returned any direct answer to any question.—"You were then," proceeded he, "a page of the Prince Mahommed's at Agra,—and one of those entrusted with his foul rebellious projects."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Alrāschid, in towering indignation, "and if Shaik Ibrahim has so informed you, I can only say he is not the true friend I esteemed him."

"You were overtaken," continued his companion, without making any observation on his intemperate language, "and stript of an important treasonable despatch, which never would have been given in charge to any one, save a confidant."

"Sir," replied the young man savagely, after he had taken a keen look at his companion, to convince himself that neither Ramjohnhy nor Buccas was alongside of him, "I know not how you are so crammed with facts connected with an individual you never before saw, and I can tell you this much, that the way in which you produce them is what I will not submit to. Do you venture to insinuate that I am a traitor and a liar?"

"I only recapitulate some facts," replied the officer, without being in any way moved;—"a satisfactory solution of which would give me considerable pleasure—nor think idle curiosity is my reason for asking this,—for I feel an interest in you, and have friends at court who might hereafter prove of service. Do you mean to assert, my son, that you were altogether ignorant of the contents of that despatch?"

"Though perfectly absolved from answering any such questions," returned Alrāschid, somewhat pacified by the other's kind intentions, "I may repeat my solemn asseveration that I was, and am as ignorant of its nature or contents, as the child unborn. What reasons may you have for inquiring so particularly on the subject?"

"Self-satisfaction as much as anything," answered the other; "but may I ask, had you never any suspicion of an attempt being made by any of Prince Mahommed's partisans to liberate Shaw Jehan, and restore him to the throne?—As you are aware perhaps that the Prince Mahommed has been an inmate for years of the imperial

prisons at Gualior—ought heard in confidence may now be safely divulged.”

“Unfortunate prince!” replied our hero,—“I am aware of his hapless fortunes. It requires not any remembrance of his situation to prompt me to tell any circumstances which may have passed betwixt us. But to cut short this most unpleasant conference, believe me in three words, I never knew any of his plans as regards rebellion, although father Ibrahim seems most unjustifiably to have impressed you with a contrary.”

“Enough!” answered the officer, with a greater cordiality of manner than he had hitherto shown. “I feel there is the stamp of truth on everything you have said; and my opinion of you is, I may say, exalted. Would your duty and feelings permit you to leave Abdulatiff, and serve the Emperor?”

“If, Sir,” replied Alraschid, “you are serious, I assure you it would be my sincerest wish and pride to serve the wise and powerful Alumgeer, nor could any duty towards my present master act as a bar, inasmuch as my services are given and accepted only during my pleasure. As nothing, therefore, need prevent, so nothing would more delight me than your exerting your influence to obtain for me a situation in the imperial household, or even with some of the distinguished Omrah’s. For I am heartily sick of Aggur, and, saving one companion, of all it contains.”

“Then,” answered the stranger, “you must accompany us to-morrow by break of day. If you had entered into any compact with the worthy Abdulatiff your master, I should have been the last person to say you must leave him unceremoniously, or in a manner which may almost seem ungrateful; but if you accept my proffered well-wishes, it is necessary, absolutely necessary, that you accompany us to-morrow morning, because the Emperor is on his route towards Cashmere, and we have a considerable number of coss to travel before we overtake

him. You had therefore better make any preparations you may deem requisite to-night, and if you think it proper, acquaint your gormandizing Jemidar of your intentions." So saying he arose, and repeating with somewhat of fervour, and at the same time with kindness: "To-morrow, my son, by day-break"—he withdrew to his followers.

CHAPTER XII.

"What is it that you would impart to me ?
 If it be aught toward the general good,
 Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,
 And I will look on both indifferently :
 For let the gods so speed me, as I love
 The name of honour more than I fear death."

It is the peculiar misfortune of the novelist to be frequently obliged to leave, with as much reluctance as any of his readers, some interesting personages, in order that others of the dramatis personæ may not be forgotten. The abruptly breaking off in any exciting scene is without doubt, a tantalizing trick of authors as old as the craft, and one commonly successful. For our own parts, we never find ourselves suddenly brought up by any unexpected and skilfully masked hiatus, without expressing bitter indignation against the cunning clerk who thus checketh our ardour. No one, for instance, ever read for the first time Don Quixote's fearful duello with the valiant Biscayan, without venting a few silent imprecations, or perhaps very audible ones, against the unnecessary stale, and unprofitable device of Cid Hamet Benengeli, whom you wish heartily at the devil. Such trickery for effect, shall purposely find no place here ; our story is as plain as the palm of the fair reader's hand, to the eye of one who is no chiromancer ; and if we are at times forced to leave a character suddenly in the lurch, 'tis but as a corporal who leaves the chit chat of well known and well tried comrades to prick on some tender-toed recruit who lingers suspiciously behind.

We have so many persons already on our list, all of

which our fingers tingle to return to, that it will hardly be expected, more especially from what has been said, that we intend returning to the party we left in the last chapter. Think of our shocking predilection, partiality, or whatever you please to call it, when we have moreover the face to acquaint you that you have finished the best part of our story, without being as yet introduced to all the acquaintances you must form, if you have patience to finish the book, and so, without further preface—we continue.

Alraschid felt in no small degree elevated, as well as proud, at the prospect of becoming one of the Emperor's horsemen, a situation truly neither high nor difficult of being obtained, but which he then considered as a stretch of ambition. His imagination already painted, in rainbow colours, the splendour of an imperial army advancing to conquest with its numberless followers, like the thickening clouds of the monsoon—banners glistening,—musicians clashing—and all other gaudy pompous pertinents. But there was one important matter which now for the first time struck him, namely, how he was to accompany his new chieftain; for the arms and horse he rode belonged to Abdulatiff, and Jeebun was not likely to permit him to carry them off, even if he had had any such intention. He immediately went in quest of his new patron, and told him of the difficulty in which he was placed.

The officer heard the story with his usual placidity of manner, which appeared almost apathy, and without making any observations told him to bring the Jemidar. This being done, he explained the matter in a few words, and ended by saying, that as the youth had voluntarily entered the service of the omnipotent Aurungzebe (or as he called him) Alumgeer, "the shadow of God on earth, and he whose wish is destiny," it was necessary he should retain possession at all events of his charger. The Jemidar, after investigating the matter with considerable acuteness became master of the two facts: that

his recruit was about to leave him, and that his horse was likely to do the same thing. Over the actions of Alraschid he had no control, longer than he chose to continue in a troop he had voluntarily entered; but with respect to all proceedings touching the horse, he was absolute judge, and he flatly objected to our hero keeping him or anything else which was the undisputable property of his master.

"He shall by no means keep them without paying for them," replied the stranger, "but as they are necessary for the Emperor's purposes, keep them he shall. This—" pointing to the signet on his finger, "does not confer a power without the capability of accomplishing!" and so saying he drew forth from his girdle a piece of silk containing a large quantity of gold, and taking out a moderate handful, he chucked the same on the ground at Jeebun's feet. The Jemidar's eyes opened like two large rat holes, at sight of so great a profusion of bullion, yet was he still uncertain whether he would be justified in receiving it in lieu of his master's chattels; these scruples were however overcome by the stranger briefly saying:

"Do I not affirm, that this young man's services are required by me, who am authorized to declare the wishes of the great Alumgeer?—he whose wish is law; the boy is anxious to accompany us; oppose not therefore the Emperor's decrees."

This settled Jeebun's qualms, and mumbling something of the duty of such a slave as himself, to avoid thwarting the imperial interests, he pocketed the money. He then turned and embraced Alraschid, of whom he was really fond, and with a voice, which by its faltering bespoke the emotions of his heart, he, after pronouncing a brief eulogy in his customary manner, called down from Allah the choicest blessings on his future days; winding all up with that only part of the koran he rightly remembered, and which scriptural piece of lore may happily be translated into "amen." After a respectful leave-

taking of the stranger he then retired and betook himself seriously to roost, at the bottom of a tree, having first swaddled himself in a long scarf with such nicety and care, as to make him appear transformed into a gigantic chrysalis.

The stranger had also turned away towards the spot where his servants, with laudable promptness, had formed a sort of tent with some cloths over the gnarled branch of a tree, and with the assistance of two or three spears. By the abstractedness of his manner, and some occasional low ejaculations he was evidently engaged in prayer or religious meditation. Alraschid also turned pensively away, but it was to perform a melancholy duty,—it was to bid adieu to his friend and associate Ulluddeen.

It was one of those delicious evenings which compensate for the sultriness of day: the untarnished moon was diffusing that gentle charm o'er nature, by which every beauty seems spell-bound, and her terrors appeased. There was nothing but the eternal music of the grasshopper to intrude upon the sacred stillness; not a zephyr to move a leaf of the wilderness of foliage—not a cloud was in the sky; not a haze in the horizon—and each star like a diamond, in spite of the moon's effulgence, sparkled distinctly, though faintly. The small open piece of ground was crowded with sleeping warriors, and the moon, as if conscious that her beams were lost on the surrounding thickets, strove to throw a more refulgent stream of brightness on this small savanna, a refulgence which was reflected by the armour of the sleepers, and the white cotton robes by which most of them were protected from the dew. How expressive a phenomenon, how solemn a monitor is sleep!—mysterious refresher of the dust, by which the soul is clogged in all her operations!—she slumbers not;—but whilst her clayey consort is bathed in material insensibility, thoughts flash which waking men know not, and imaginings burn which spirits then only dream. Sleep is

the obvious type of that long natural slumber in which all our imperfections shall be drowned ; the natal day of new energies—the dawn of higher endowments.—If not so, why the ecstatic longing after its certainty ?—as even the eagle's eye cannot scan the glorious sun unless when dimmed with vapour, so can we only see something of the mind when connected with her fleshy medium. As the most fragrant perfumes are elicited by burning, or decomposing their grosser substances, so that divine emanation, the soul, must aspire to the dignity of its nature, by being emancipated from the trammels of corruption—and shall she not spring triumphant from her bonds ?—shall not our spirits in community with those we loved, flutter o'er sunny fields viewless, and unfettered as the breeze ?—now perhaps hanging fondly and motionless as yon sluggish autumnal haze over spots formerly dear ; and now, with electric rapidity, threading an entangled maze of worlds, seeing, unseen, hearing, unheard ?—The wise fear not death—a blight on dull mortality !

But, to return to more sublunary matters : Alraschid found his friend breathing heavily and snoring as if for a bet against Puck, or any other night-mare distributor—but a tap from the breech of his firelock soon awoke him, and he started up with stretched eyes and open mouth expecting to see the horrid reality of what he had been wincing under in a vision ; instead however of meeting a huge pair of red hot goggles and an open mouthed nine years' old displaying teeth each a foot long, and yellow as gambouche, the handsome but grave features of his friend became gradually embodied before him, and a brazen hoof with shaggy postern, changed into a matchlock.

“ Good Heavens ! ” exclaimed Ulluddeen opening his eyes as much further as his lids would admit. “ such a hideous dream as I have had !—I owe you at least a maund of pawn for dispelling it, but with what important tidings are you fraught ? ” demanded he, smiling at the

parsonised physiognomy of his friend. "Is the brown mare lame? (his dream still influencing his questions) or your tobacco, or betel expended?—your pipe broken? or the vision of that peerless, what's her name—Noo-run?"....

"Tush!" replied Alraschid pettishly, "peace with thy foolery, you little suspect the nature of my visit. I am no longer in Abdulatiff's service; it was to bid farewell I woke you."

"Indeed," replied the hurkaru with a levity of manner which contrasted as much with his companion's, as it seemed unsuited to the occasion, "nothing more becomes a man than civility—true, charity is better; but civility is a sort of succedaneum for that cardinal virtue. But I pray, who has now a mortgage on your corporeal?"

"I have enlisted," replied Alraschid, with an expression of dignity, approaching to pride, kindling his eye, "in the service of his Imperial Highness."

"Alas then," responded Ulluddeen with a droll semblance of regret, "then am I indeed sorry for our poor disconsolate master Abdulatiff; in as much as he in one day has lost, the most promising of spearmen, thyself; and moreover that choice pink of all excellent hurkarus, your humble servant. Poor Rajah! irreparable losses!—nay, stare not"—continued he more seriously, observing his friend's surprise. "Do you esteem my affection so common-place a matter, so skin-deep a passion as to be chilled, or risked being chilled, by any such trifling circumstance as a change of masters?—Ha, ha! I see your amazement; but I will cut short the whole of my intended eulogy on true friendship, by saying I will accompany you."

His companion's delight may be conceived at this frank, friendly avowal; but after a mutual embrace, the same suggestion concerning his friend's horse and accoutrements, as had puzzled himself, occurred. This Ulluddeen however instantly dispelled.

"I am differently situated from what you were," said he; "my beast though a sorry one is mine own, as well as my weapons; for I am no regular trooper; and as for my personal part, I believe it too worthless to be ever missed or inquired after."

A prolonged chat now took place unworthy of being mentioned, concerning their future plans and prospects. Each had already, in perspective, performed wonderful achievements, and caught Fortune in his arms. The hurkaru, who had no mistress, thought only of himself; but Alraschid's ardent and lofty aspirations were but the stepping stone to more tender and distant expectations, which even to his love-tinctured faculties appeared extravagantly wild.

Both now prepared themselves for sleep, though for some time they continued talking at intervals. These pauses became longer, till at last Alraschid received no other answer to some interrogatory than a snore, and he himself was soon afterwards sound asleep. The same excitement which had kept them awake, made them the easiest and first roused, and the trumpet had not finished its first long monotonous blast before the two friends had sprung to their feet. First were heard long yawns with a few hoarse voices gruffly awakening their neighbours; these became gradually louder and more frequent, till at last the rattling of bridles and armour, the neighing and kicking of horses, and the unceasing curses of the troopers were blended in one overpowering din.

It being about four o'clock, the moon was shining brilliantly, and by her light the steeds were soon caparisoned, when after another blast of the trumpet the whole party defiled from the jungle, passing below the trees on which were suspended a score of the most hideous of corpses, and leaving Jeebun and his men fast asleep. As they proceeded, Alraschid and his friend were surprised at the extraordinary reserve of their new captain. No one durst use any familiarity towards him, and saving to his own immediate attendants and a guide, not a word did

he address that day to a single individual;—the difference betwixt this and the frank blunt Jemidar struck them most forcibly.

He was an admirable horseman; and the spear appeared to have been assumed by him as much for hunting as fighting, for he invariably directed his route through the roughest jungle country, and he had many opportunities of displaying his dexterous use of the weapon in spearing the boars which his men beat out of the abundant cover. Very few indeed escaped him.

Our hero, who felt nettled and indignant, at such sudden haughtiness, could not refrain from asking several of his comrades whether their commander was usually so morose; none however could, or would answer satisfactorily; some had never before been under his command; others knew nothing of him, not even his name, whilst others, who said his name was Mohun parried his questions in such a manner as made him suspect they knew much more of his character than they thought it prudent to divulge. One piece of information he however gained, which was that they would not reach the imperial army for some days. At the same early hour every morning the troops were in motion, and shortly after noon, on the fifth day of their journey, an extensive cloud of some miles in advance proclaimed their proximity to the armed host, of which they were in quest.

In the course of an hour they came up with parties of stragglers, and on passing were greeted by them with that customary shout of "Ram, Ram," which falls so cheerily on the ears of travellers and pilgrims; half-an-hour's more leisurely riding brought them within sight of the main body of this immense multitude. It was a spectacle such as neither Alraschid nor his friend had ever beheld in miniature, for no miniature could possibly be produced of so imposing a nature; every individual of this mighty swarm appeared in high good humour, and a great number were singing a song in which the immediate crowd joined chorus; this had an indescriba-

bly sublime effect. Like some locust cloud, and generally speaking without any attention to order, they proceeded thus noisily and slowly.

The very plains were uncultivated, though they bore testimony of their ruinous route; for columns of smoke and flame as far as the eye could reach, and the blackness of the country, showed that large tracts of grass and jungle were still burning in one gigantic circle around the host, which had carelessly or intentionally acted as incendiaries. The greater proportion of the fighting men were mounted, but the immense population of camp followers which brought up the rear on foot, reminded one of those unaccountable hordes, which History mentions as having at times burst forth from the womb of Tartary, or other more northern regions.

These were for the most part like jackals,—hunters after the dead, their principal business being to murder the wounded and to despoil the slain; to these wretches it was a matter of small importance which party was victorious; either way they were gainers, as the vulture gorges himself indiscriminately on the Mussulman or Hindoo. The whole had an appearance motley and remarkable: hundreds of elephants carrying amauries, or war castles, filled with soldiers, panoplied in shining steel, moved majestically forward; their directors or mahouts seated on their necks being clad in complete armour to make up for the danger of their situation; these were succeeded by crowds of ungainly dromedaries, each mounted by a soldier, defended by a steel cuirass and shield, whose occupation was to discharge a small field piece, affixed to its hunch. Thousands of horsemen, well and variously armed, followed these, with banners of all shapes, colours and dimensions; next succeeded a train of bullocks, dragging lazily forward, amongst the imprecations and incessant jabbering of their drivers, some clumsy pieces of artillery and baggage; these were surrounded by several thousands of cavalry, cattle, which though seemingly starved and

weak were as capable of arduous and continued exertion as the plumpest body of horse under the sun. Escorted by a select guard, in all respects well and ostentatiously appointed, followed the magnificent "nallekee" of the Emperor.

This vehicle which none but majesty is permitted to use, is a canopied litter, supported on the shoulders of slaves by three poles, and usually made of silver or other costly materials. Near it was raised and immense gilt umbrella, which, however ludicrous it may appear to European nations, is another peculiar privilege of royalty. This was surrounded by a numerous staff composed of the highest officers of state, some on elephants, others in palanqueens, with a gorgeous rabble of inferior personages. Then came perhaps the most splendid portion of the pageant.

It was a long string of large Pegu elephants, each carrying a howdah, containing one of the favourite inmates of the harem. These stately animals were completely covered with trappings of the most beautiful and valuable description. Being hidden from view, each of these ladies had still the power of seeing everything going on through curtains of the finest muslin, with which their castles were furnished. These castles were either of the richest gilding or of silver, and the director of the elephant appeared cased in gold.

We will give scope to the fancy, and not attempt describing such passing grandeur;—suffice it, there were about thirty such superb conveyances, some richer than others;—and that the first in which was seated Rochinara, the sister of Aurungzebe, (whose sole consideration was pompous show) was the grandest without compare.

A dense mass of the usual guards of the Emperor's wives, some mounted on Arabian horses, and others on foot, surrounded this interesting group, and repelled the curious; not with their arms, but with long gilt wooden staves which they carried for that purpose. Another

body of well-armed horsemen succeeded; after which even the general outline of regularity was lost;—innumerable gangs of fiddlers, dancers, singers, jugglers, and tumblers, all by profession and education thieves, acted the part of light infantry, skirmishing in all directions, and using every endeavour by their amusing tricks, and ceaseless importunities to extract a few coppers from the soldiery. But these were as quickly again transferred to some itinerant vender of shraub for a few elevating drops of arrack, or opium, or tobacco. This mighty tide of existence after sweeping over a few miles in an eastern direction, came up with the peechkannahs or tents, which are despatched always one journey in advance of the encampment of the army, in order to be ready to receive the Emperor and nobles, who are able to afford a double set of marching equipage.

At sight of their halting ground, the army set up a loud reiterated shout, which resembled the booming of ocean on a rocky shore. As neither Alraschid nor the hurkaru had any of the necessities indispensable for a march, which was likely to be of fifty or sixty days' longer continuance, they naturally looked about for their captain, to ask his advice or assistance. He was not, however, to be found, and their perplexity was, if any thing, increased by the impossibility of discovering one whose name they could not conjecture, for Mohun which means "*beloved*," be it known, is often used as an appellative, without its being the real name of the person to whom it is applied. Philosophy is often nothing better than resignation to necessity; and our two friends (for so we call them, not only in contradistinction to all the reader's foes, but in order to avoid writing their trisyllabic names) seated themselves a little apart from every one, and smoked their pipes with a degree of nonchalance wonderfully becoming. The hurkaru, whose physiognomy one would have thought had been cast in a mould like a bullet, by the hands of the god of mirth

himself, joked incessantly at their predicament, and Al-raschid could not refrain from chuckling as much at the queerness of their situation, as at the good nature, general temper, spirits, good sense, and cheerfulness of his companion. The remainder of the day was spent by them without speaking to any other individual; and they retired to rest with the determination that if next day, or at furthest the day after, they did not meet or hear something of their employer, they would quit the army, to which, as they both suspected, they must have been decoyed from some sinister unknown motive.

To one who has never witnessed an Asiatic encampment, any attempt at describing it must appear faulty, because incongruous; and assuming this as a sort of descriptive axiom, admitting of no refutation, we of course feel no manner of fear in attempting a mere outline; for we wish to finish the thing in a manner as sketchy as possible, holding all shading in utter contempt, and more especially as we have so very much left yet untouched, as to make it apochryphal whether or no one half we intended to treat of can appear.

Pre-eminently conspicuous, as might be expected, above this canvass city appeared the imperial tents. These formed exclusively a large encampment as it were in front of the rest, and being elevated on artificial moundings several feet above all the others, they had a majestic, commanding appearance. The largest of these tents, which was pitched in the very centre of the line, was styled the aumkas, and was devoted entirely for the accommodation of the chiefs and ministers of state, whose duty it was to attend every morning the Emperor's court or durbar. It was composed of rich red cloth, ornamented with patterns of flowers and leaves, of brighter as well as darker colours; and from the uncommon greatness of its size, instead of two or three pillars, six were necessary for its support, each of which was capped on the outside by a splendidly gilt ball. The numerous

cords with which it was fastened and extended, were of green silk, and the pins or maiks gilt and painted to correspond.

Next to this of the same oblong shape, and only dissimilar in being of smaller dimensions, was the bathing tent or (gossal konnah), a convenience indispensable in Asiatic countries, as much from reasons of health, cleanliness, and pleasure, as for performing the "tiummum" or moslem rite of purification. A great number of other tents, for the convenience of the ladies, the household, and privacy of Aurungzebe, extended on either side for nearly half a mile. The interior furnishing of these tents was composed of the most beautiful silks, muslins and Persian carpets, with magnificent porcelain vases, filled with flowers and perfumes, and cabinets of the most costly plate. But none of this magnificence could be seen from without, for an enclosure of kanauts (or skreens) by which the whole were surrounded; these skreens were about eight feet high, and resembled, from the colour of the cloth of which they were made, an immense brick wall.

Thousands of guards were posted around them, so as to preclude a possibility of thieves obtaining an entrance, or the idle indulging curiosity. Immediately behind were pitched a hundred different booths for the Emperor's domestics, and different departments of his household; all of which were encircled by a similar range of skreens and guards. In a long line and a little behind the royal tents were pitched those of the great Omrah's, each according to the owner's dignity, being elevated on a higher dais, and nearer the monarch's quarters.

The establishments of these nobles were precisely similar to their princes, only on a more limited scale; and each was surrounded by a cloud of retainers, for the accommodation of which with food and other necessities, several bazaars were established. The situation of these moving markets, of which it may be supposed there was

no small number, was designated by very lofty bamboos from which streamers were suspended, and their being dispersed over the confusedly crowded plain conduced much to the liveliness of the scene. Behind the space allotted to the nobles and their retinues, by the quarter master general, whose authoritative orders of disposition were most rigorously enforced, an indiscriminate assemblage of canvass of all shapes, colours, and sizes succeeded; and for the extent of at least a couple of miles the plain was covered with waggons, camels, and elephants, devouring their leafy meal of branches stripped from some congenial tree, or bullocks quietly eating their boosra or chaff mixed with vetches.

Such an assemblage had at night a strange but pleasing appearance; thousands of noisy musalchees, or link boys, were darting about in all directions with the litters of the nobility, or standing before their different tents; whilst innumerable fires and lights on every side, resembled a part of ocean when at night every wave seems curling with flame; nor were noises and sounds of every diversity wanting. The shouts, curses, laughter and song of soldiers; the incessant beating of tom toms in accompaniment to the singers, with different kinds of instruments, wind and stringed; the ceaseless neighing and tumultuous fighting of horses, broken loose from where they were picquetted; the shrill piping of elephants; the thrilling yells of jackals, and the barking of Pariar curs, thousands of which followed the army and lived upon its offal; the deep gurgling of the dromedaries, as with outstretched necks they injected into their mouths the water which they carried in those strange cisterns given them by nature; all these commingled together formed a ceaseless din resembling nothing else on earth.

Such was the scene and such its discordant attendants, when our young recruits stretched themselves on the bare ground, with the intention of sleeping, though the hurkaru did nothing but laugh and chatter. They had

not long remained thus, before a trooper who had all along kept within sight of them, though without attempting to join in the conversation came up, and after a civil salutation requested Alraschid to follow him to his commanding officer.

END OF VOL. I.

AURUNGZEBE;

OR,

A TALE OF ALRASCHID.

"Ye proud oppressors, whose vain hearts exult,
In wantonness of power; 'gainst the brute race,
Fierce robbers like yourselves, a guiltless war
Wage uncontrolled; here quench your thirst of blood;
But learn from Aurungzebe to spare mankind."

SOMERVILLE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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AURUNGZEBE.

CHAPTER XIII.

“————— High upon his throne,
Borne on the back of his proud elephant,
Sits the great chief of Tamur’s glorious race;
Sublime he sits amidst the radiant blaze
Of gems and gold. Omrahs about him crowd,
And rein th’ Arabian steed, and watch his nod,
And potent Rajahs, who themselves preside
O’er realms of wide extent; but here submit
Their homage pay, alternate kings and slaves!”

SOMERVILLE.

To this summons Alraschid joyfully assented, after settling with Ulluddeen where they should meet, for without such a precaution, it was unlikely that they would ever have again fallen on each other. The soldier, without speaking much, threaded leisurely the crowd till he approached within about two hundred yards of the back of the second enclosure belonging to the Emperor.

Here they were instantly challenged by the (chokeedars) or watchmen, after a preliminary shout and hoarse “kuberdar!” their invariable cry and one ominous to thieves, which means, “take care.” “Benares,” whispered the guide, and they passed on. A hundred yards further brought them to the military sentinels, by whom they were again challenged. After conversing a few words with them, the soldier advanced towards a per-

sonage who by his dress had evidently authority over the guards, and presented to him a small piece of paper bearing a seal.

After perusing this by the light of a torch, he placed it in a sort of pocket book from which he took another somewhat similar and gave it in exchange; they now advanced to the very "kanauts" of the imperial encampment, and were again challenged by another sentinel. Alraschid's conductor had another short conference with the officer on duty here, and presented him with the passport he had just obtained. This officer, who seemed of some rank, now accompanied them with a torch bearer to a part of the skreens which could easily be opened, and near which two soldiers were stationed; this he personally opened, and making a courteous salam to the guide, ushered the pair into the external enclosure of the royal encampment.

Although, as we before stated, this group of tents was solely devoted to the accommodation of Aurungzebe's domestics and the different departments of his household, yet did it convey no lesser impression of royal magnificence and splendour than those occupied by the monarch. By the glare of the numberless torches Alraschid could discover crowds of menials in the richest dresses; some carrying heavy maces and rods of silver, and others running about with gold and silver chalices, laden with various necessaries and luxuries.

A range of tents were wholly occupied by fruiterers and vegetable dressers. Another was filled with those to whom were entrusted the preparing of the betel used by the princes and courtiers, and another was appropriated to the "abdars" or water-coolers, each of which had a large leaden basin, with leaden bottles and saltpetre, by means of which, dissolved in water, the Emperor's beverage was cooled. Another was exclusively occupied by "hookurburdars," or preparers of the pipe, and several of these were moving in different directions carrying fresh chillums (changes of tobacco,) or with

silver vases containing the burning gools (or balls) with which that weed is kept ignited. Through these multifariously occupied booths, which extended about a quarter of a mile, the soldier conducted the recruit till they reached a small wooden gate, which led into the Emperor's own enclosure.

Two well dressed and well armed soldiers stood at this portal, (which seemed placed in the skreens to facilitate instead of hindering entrance) and seeing the military dress of our friends, as usual stopped and challenged them. "Moorshedabad," said the guide, and the wicket was instantly opened; they now stepped into the inner and sacred precincts of the Emperor's encampment. From the immense number of torches which were kept fiercely blazing by having oil poured over them, this space was as light as day; servants of different kinds were passing in all directions with bare feet, and with scrupulous silence, to enforce which several ushers exerted their extreme authority.

Alraschid's director, who was considerably in advance, now beckoned him to follow, and they came to a small tent which was the smallest and most extreme of the collection. Into this they entered without any ceremony or difficulty, save being questioned by a solitary watchman at the entrance, and Alraschid saw, as soon as his eyes could adapt themselves to the more gloomy atmosphere within, the solitary person of his commander.

He was seated before a small writing desk, fenced on every side save that next him with silver rails, and a mass of papers were scattered within reach. His guide, having ushered in Alraschid, withdrew, and he stood for awhile unregarded, the officer appearing too much engrossed to pay him immediate attention, although aware of his presence. At length laying down his pen on the only book near him, and which from the binding had much the semblance of the holy koran, he saluted his young recruit in a much more courteous manner than he had anticipated.

"You see, my son," said he, "I am not idle now," pointing to his papers, "nor have I any excuse for being so: you will therefore oblige me by answering any questions which I may put, briefly and distinctly."

"Anything you may ask," replied Alraschid, "shall be shortly answered, if I conceive myself justified in doing so at all."

"You told me," resumed the officer, "in our previous conversation, that you were an eye witness of the murder of Omar's mother, by which means you were brought into a series of scrapes and sufferings."

"I did, Sir, describe most distinctly that portion of my story," replied the recruit.

"Then let me tell you," rejoined the Captain with a smile of bitter and sarcastic triumph, "the mother of Selim's nephew is as much alive as you are, aye, and likely perchance as long to live!"

These words he delivered in a harsh foreboding manner, accompanied by one of his withering glances which made the page shake with unaccountable terror.

"Sir," answered Alraschid, whose rage at having his word thus flatly contradicted gave way to personal apprehension, "I say it is impossible! these hands for a few minutes supported the lifeless body; and I am willing to pledge my own life for the truth of all I told you."

"You are ingenious, my son, but not ingenuous," replied the soldier: "prithee know you nothing of a certain daughter of the Nawaub?"

The astonishment of our hero at this question prevented him answering, and it was not till his commander had thrice repeated his question that he stammered out:

"Who, Sir, are you, or how in heaven's name know you so much of my affairs! Can it be that those in whom I thought myself as safe in confiding a secret, as my life, have betrayed me?"

"I see," replied the soldier, "how things are, my question requires no further answer; another I would

put, were it not that I believe your lips too accustomed to falsehood and baseness to make it worth my trouble."

Had an arrow pierced Alraschid to the heart, he could not have experienced a pang equal to what these words inflicted, but what in other circumstances would have been passion ungovernable, and dangerous to the officer, was supplanted by wonder. The stern rebuke of his commander was delivered with a fearlessness and authority which quite shielded him from the effects of the young man's fury. It fell from his lips as from an exasperated and at the same time grieved parent, and he blenched no more before Alraschid's working features and exasperated looks than if it had been a perfect child he had been correcting. Ere he had time to speak, the arras in front of him was drawn aside and admitted a well known form; never could relief to a surcharged heart have more opportunely shown itself. For an instant he gazed with an intenseness equal to his agitation, and, darting forward, clasped old father Ibrahim in his embraces.

"Retire," exclaimed the officer, "for a few minutes," addressing his recruit.

"Dear father," cried Alraschid, without heeding this mandate, "you have come in time to see me most cruelly abused; but how are all at Ougien!"

The Shaik, who was much more splendidly dressed than ever our hero had seen him, returned this greeting in a cooler manner than he had before experienced, and without answering a word.

"Leave us," reiterated the officer, opening the book; "son of Ajimut, retire!"

But the recruit was too much taken up with making out a string of inquiries, to pay prompt obedience to this order.

"Young scoundrel!" at last exclaimed the officer much exasperated at this want of respect, "are you so little acquainted with the regard due to superiors? at your peril, leave us, this instant!"

Ibrahim, who now trembled all over with perturbation, could keep silence no longer, but, seizing his pupil's arm, cried in a low hurried manner :

"Down, down on your knees, rash boy, and deprecate the Emperor's vengeance !"

Admission into the august presence of royalty, for the first time, is impressive if not overpowering ; but when one unexpectedly discovers himself not only before majesty, but behaving with unbecoming levity and deficient reverence, the elucidation is as a thunder shock. Al-raschid's amazement, amounting at first to unbelief that his new commander was no less or other than Aurungzebe, plunged him into a momentary stupefaction ; it was, however, the lips of Ibrahim (never polluted by falsehood) which had made the announcement. All doubts vanished, and he prostrated himself before the monarch, with a beating heart, as much, from having unintentionally offended, as from being unjustly despised.

"Arise, young man," said Aurungzebe in a more subdued manner, "your ignorance of our rank pardons all intemperate conduct ; but you, Ibrahim," laying a strength of expression on the words, and bestowing a look, in lieu of which he willingly would have received a kick, "you might at least have awaited our pleasure, before exposing our identity. But, arise, son of Ajimut, and leave us ; your presence may again be shortly required."

Hardly conscious how he acquitted himself as regarded etiquette, Al-raschid, confusedly and without venturing to raise his eyes, glided out of the tent. Unmoved as was generally Ibrahim, in the imperial presence, the unusual display of anger by the King had greatly agitated him for his friend's sake, and it was not without strong emotion, which however gradually subsided, that he said :

"For my imprudent divulging of your Majesty's person, let me in the first place crave forgiveness ; and then, if I may ask another boon, permit me, Sire, to be heard

in behalf of that individual, who has indirectly made me guilty of this dereliction?"

"Cheerfully conceded," returned the monarch; "if you can say aught commendable in the youth's favour, it cannot fall on ears more willing to listen, though more credulous of believing."

"From your highness's strict and correct manner of thinking," replied the Shaik, "as also from the judgment and nicety with which experience has enabled you to balance the actions of mankind, I can easily believe it will require very cogent proofs to change the present unjust estimation which you entertain of my young friend: and yet, if the welfare and reputation of so insignificant an individual, would excuse my occupying a little of your precious time, I feel sure your Majesty would be induced to form a better opinion of him."

"Our time," replied the King, "is as you know valuable; but never shall it be said, Aurungzebe found not sufficient of it to spare in the cause of justice. What would you?"

"I would," replied father Ibrahim, "that your highness condescend to hear the testimony of one of your most indefatigable and useful emissaries, one who has transmitted most of the valuable information you have obtained concerning the rebellious horde of zealots."

"By all means," said the Emperor, somewhat anxiously, "for, by our blessed Prophet, something must be determined on touching these hypocritical villains, whose audacity and lawlessness is becoming seriously dangerous—introduce him forthwith."

Ibrahim accordingly departed, and very soon re-entered with the scantily clad, dye decorated person of Buccas, the fakier.

"What strange being is this?" demanded Aurungzebe, who, although accustomed to many a fearful specimen of fantastic fanaticism, had never before beheld one so utterly extravagant, save in distortion.

"He is a good man," replied Ibrahim, "though an

unbeliever, and one who has done your——" here the flashing eye of the King darted savagely on the Shaik, till recollecting himself he stammered out, "one who has done the Emperor no small service."

"Yes, by the unknown mother who bore me?" ejaculated Buccas, without waiting for any introduction, and who had just discussed a grim smile, on hearing himself designated by the simple hearted Ibrahim as a good man, "yes," continued he, "good weather, and bad weather know me; the sun, when in his scarlet fever, knows my shadow as well as the consumptive moon; they have ever recognized it stalking in the good cause of the Emperor, or mankind at large:" and here he assumed a hideous leer of self-satisfaction, through which, however, he was narrowly watching the drift of this strange interview.

"This," said the Shaik, "is Buccas the Yoga, who amongst other notable loyal achievements, you may remember, some years ago, relieved Alraschid of a valuable packet, despatched by the Prince Mohammed."

"I do well remember hearing of him," answered Aurungzebe, "but what, I pray, is the immediate business of this visit?"

"To bear testimony, Sir, as I promised to produce, that the son of Ajimut spoke nothing but truth, in saying he saw Mootee, the mother of Selim's nephew, murdered."

"Which," said the King, "if you can prove, will guarantee the veracity of everything else questionable which he has spoken. What know you about this murder, good Buccas?"

"I know," answered the fakier in a positive careless manner, "that she is no more murdered than I am; more's the pity, and yet," continued he, without waiting for any observation, "I altogether absolve Alraschid from a want of veracity."

"Explain," said Aurungzebe, "we are not accustomed to deal in riddles."

"Nor I," responded Buccas, "yet I must say, that although I have maltreated and plundered the young gosling, as I felt myself in duty bound, I do him nothing more than justice in saying, I deem him incapable of a falsehood. Nor am I a whit surprised, that his weak capacity should have supposed the withered witch killed; for, tramp upon my corns, if I myself thought, on finding her, that there was as much life in her body, as would have sufficed for the foetus of a flea."

"You found her?" demanded the king.

"To be sure," replied Buccas; "and a pretty wind-fall it was, with a curse to it. I believe I did not recover my own proper wind for three days afterwards; for you must know, that after getting the poor devil out of a vault, darker and closer than an alligator's belly, in which she was squirting out her blood like an idiot his spittle, I had to staunch a most difficult perverse gash in her ugly breast; then I had to hoist her out of a well, which might have puzzled her own cub of a conjurer, and afterwards to carry her a good couple of miles to a cottage, where, after laying six weeks on the very toss up betwixt life and death, she at length got better."

"And how," asked Aurungzebe, "came you to act so conspicuous a part in the affair?"

"That, Sir," answered the fakier, "is easily explained. I must tell you, that, until Alraschid discovered the cave, I was perhaps the only being, save Omar, aware of its existence. When a young lad, I fell in with it by accident, during one of my idle exploring rambles, though then it was nothing but a small ruined chamber or gallery in the bowley. Happening several years afterwards to pass near it, fancy prompted me again to visit the place, without having any ulterior object than the satisfying that curiosity we all feel in the scenes of our boyhood. On doing this, my wonder was, as you may suppose, raised, by not being able to find the ruined chamber. After some trouble and a considerable exertion of patience, I found out the ingenious manner in

which the entrance was concealed, and was still more astonished to find it fitted up as an apartment, and crammed with all manner of scientific instruments and trash. Naturally inquisitive, I was anxious to satisfy myself as to the meaning of all this, and taking extreme precaution against any danger or discovery, ventured several times down the well, and, by partially withdrawing the partition, could see and hear all that passed within. I need not mention the folly, villainy, and treasonable plots I overheard, all of which were by me forwarded to court; suffice it that the last time I availed myself of my secret, Mootee was nearly losing her life, as young Alraschid has previously recounted."

"Well," replied the King, "I must say your story is every bit as extraordinary as was Alraschid's, it has however with me a much different effect; for, knowing as I do, there could be no collusion betwixt you, its very wildness and improbability corroborates every thing, which induced me to view him as a traitor and liar of the first water. Father Ibrahim are you satisfied?"

"More than satisfied! your——" but he again stopt short; "more than satisfied! I am overpowered with gratitude, for the perfect justice you have been at the trouble of bestowing, upon one of the most promising lads I ever took an interest in."

"Then," continued Aurungzebe, "I am not. Shaik Ibrahim, I request you will cause your friend (pointing to the fakier) to withdraw, and again bring the son of Ajimut before us."

This was soon done, though Buccas expressed himself rather bluntly on the cavalier treatment shown him, after obtaining so much information.

"My son," said the monarch, addressing Alraschid, and throwing down a paper which his busy mind had meanwhile been digesting, "we have again called you before us not to push further our examination on your conduct, but to pronounce judgment;" and he here paused for a moment to scrutinize the young man's

countenance, "of each and every charge brought against you, we absolve you, having perfect satisfaction of the excellence of your character."

Here Alraschid fell upon his knees and kissed the ground near the Emperor's feet, with a devotion and joy he could not restrain; his incoherent thanks, however, to which Aurungzebe paid no attention, were cut short by his thus proceeding:

"It is our duty as it is our interest, young man, to be suspicious of all our servants and to scrutinize severely before we form an opinion; in doing this we may sometimes injure, and we hope rarely, but when we find we have injured, the palm of our hand is ever open to afford ample reparation; it is our will to entrust you with a commission of importance and confidence, the nature of which our friend Ibrahim will explain, and the particulars of which shall be conveyed to you to-morrow, after attending our Durbar, at which we require your presence. In the mean time, whatever necessities you may stand in immediate need of, Shaik Ibrahim will supply. Farewell, my son, and remember we expect your attendance on the morrow."

Our hero, hardly conscious of this unexpected change in the aspect of his fortunes, accordingly withdrew, under the guidance of his good friend Ibrahim.

Next day, Alraschid repaired to the tent of the Imperial Durbar, accompanied by Shaik Ibrahim and Ulluddeen, who could scarcely give credit to all he had told him. Aurungzebe was ever accessible to those who sought his judgment or protection, and the dense crowd which surrounded the immediate neighbourhood of his tent, seemed at first a barrier perfectly impervious. Notwithstanding, however, a nearer approach appeared next to impossible, they found that a narrow passage which divided this vast host, was, by great exertion on the part of noisy sipahees and porters, kept perfectly clear, and into it only such were permitted to intrude, as had some satisfactory reason to afford for seeking the imperial pre-

sence. The chief difficulty therefore was, to obtain entrance into this living defile, which they by means of Ibrahim's authority accomplished, after some little defamation, and a great deal of squeezing and jabbering;—without which nothing, however unimportant, can be managed in India.

Fairly in the current, the party was gradually rolled on by those behind, and very shortly arrived within a hundred yards of the great canvass court of audience. Here they were stayed by a numerous body of troops and domestics, who formed a bulwark betwixt the motley crowd, and a square piece of ground immediately fronting the assembled grandees.

Into this enclosure, the authoritative manner of Ibrahim easily obtained an entrance for Alraschid, though the hurkaru, who had no personal business, was forced to withdraw through another opening, by which those returned, whose causes had been decided by the monarch. Having crossed this, they came to the grand entrance of the tent, when the page's eyes, though formerly used to pomp and grandeur, were dazzled by the gorgeous scene which opened upon them. Most conspicuous, yet plainest in appearance, sat Aurungzebe, his searching thoughtful countenance fixed on a poor rugged wretch, who, with uplifted trembling hands, was, in a frightened tremulous voice, recapitulating some piece of oppression or cruelty, for which, perchance, one of the gilded satellites around him would ere long suffer. He was seated on a magnificent throne of ivory and gold, the back of which represented a peacock's tail, and was altogether composed of precious stones.

On either side of him extended, in a semicircle, the most powerful Omrahs of the empire. Unlike their master, it seemed to have been the aim of every one of these to outvie each other in a splendid profusion, and the richness of their dresses, covered with gold and diamonds, the most magnificent shawls, and the no less ostentatious display of the numerous attendants, carry-

ing clubs or fans of gold and silver, struck Alraschid as belonging to some scene of enchantment rather than reality. All this had but little effect on the Shaik, and his young companion could not help observing, that Ibrahim, though plain even to humility in his appearance, was received by all the proud nobility with respectful attention. To every one of them he seemed known, and having entered into conversation with a knot of the most sedate elderly looking persons near him, Alraschid indulged his curiosity, by surveying the magnificence on every side.

We need not insert any catalogue of the splendid furniture of the tent, which was lined with green silk throughout, and carpeted with stuffs of the costliest Persian, whilst its prodigious extent was upheld by ranges of gilt pillars. From the contemplation of all the riches and gaudiness collected beneath it, his attention was aroused by hearing his name audibly pronounced, whilst a short transient stillness of the suppressed buzz of voices, instantly succeeded.

"Go forward," said Ibrahim, "and be not discomposed."

Again one of the officers of the household named him, and summoning all his nerve—our hero advanced in front of the throne, after making the customary obeisances, and stood in breathless anxiety before the Mogul Emperor, in all his blaze of Majesty.

"This," said Aurungzebe, addressing a warlike looking person on his right hand, "this, Mohabet, is the young man whom we have resolved to employ in the Malva business; he is gifted with abilities and courage, and is faithful."

Mohahet bowed assent.

"Son of Ajimut of Ougien," continued the King, in a kind manner, which dissipated greatly his embarrassment, "the matters with which we are about to entrust you, require only moderate prudence for their successful completion. We have here (handing him a packet)

written down the outline of your proceedings, leaving it to be filled up with your own judgment and expediency, and we, moreover, give you command of five hundred of our choicest troopers, who will execute anything you may deem necessary, however perilous."

All the court was now hushed, from curiosity to see who this new favourite could be, and immediately afterwards a thousand whispers from outstretched necks of "Ajimut of Ougien and five hundred horse!" with many interrogatories, were banded about to little purpose, as all were ignorant of the young favourite. No sooner were some ceremonies connected with the appointment finished, than two attendants stepped forward, and arrayed Alraschid in a splendid kilaut (or garb of honour,) presenting him with a hundred gold mohurs, and one very large medal or coin of the same metal, worth about as many more. At the same time, another loudly proclaimed his newly acquired dignity and titles. He was then almost forcibly perched on a splendidly caparisoned charger, and after escaping through a dense throng of elephants, palanqueens, and Arab horses, he was paraded, as if he had been some stupendous curiosity, round all the royal tents, with much clamour and clatter.

CHAPTER XIV.

" 'Tis slander,
 Whose edge is sharper than the sword ; whose tongue
 Outvenoms all the worms of Nile ; whose breath
 Rides on the posting wind, and doth belie
 All corners of the world : kings, queens, and states,
 Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave,
 This viperous slander enters."

CYMBELINE.

It is a frequent failing with romance writers, when they have in any way neglected a character, or deviated from a judicious concatenation of events, which they intended embodying at the outset, to sin still more sadly, by producing well turned apologies for their errors ; in which however they generally succeed, about as well as when a clumsy writer, upsetting his wine glass at table, commits the excruciating vulgarity of striving to appease the old maiden proprietor of the nappery, by emptying on the rubicund stain, one half the contents of a neatly smoothed salt cellar.

We have now precisely such a task to perform ; instead of wine, we have indeed spilt much ink on many personages, without for a long time flipping one penful at the poor daughter of Selim, who certainly merited a more worthy bespattering ; nay, we have carried our silence to such an excess, that the salt which we now throw over our left shoulder, for luck upon our previous preferences, is meant not only to appease the justly impatient, but to eradicate a horrid suspicion, likely to arise in minds critically sceptical ; and that is, that our tale is the production of some serious heathen whose one-eyed

creed credits woman to be devoid of soul ;—the probability of this awful fallacy causes our very flesh to creep.

Woman, fond, fostering, forbearing woman, merely brutal !—merely material !—professed prattlers we have met of this doctrine, but where can the true believer be found ? for whatever the proselyte may gabble to his priest,—can the husband believe it of his beloved partner—the child of its parent—or the lover of his mistress ? But as this has little to do with what is before us, and having at length apologized for our misdemeanours, we will resume.

Never did prisoner on the eve of separation from every thing hallowed by hope and love, await more distractingly the morrow than Noorun, the one which was to seal her doom. Her father had pronounced it. She was,—she must be Omar's. And the hour was near at hand, when her own lips were to ratify his promise and command.

It requires no powerful pen to portray her feelings, for when we simply reflect, that Alraschid, on whom her affections were fixed, was the very converse, in every respect, of the disgusting heartless wretch, who was bent on obtaining her, the imagination will stand in need of little auxiliary assistance. That dreadful night was consumed by the hapless lady, in tears and sorrowful reflections on her bitter destiny ; nor could her faithful friend Johorun have been more disconsolate, had she herself been similarly situated.

The glorious sun had long streamed through the gloomy glades of the noble woods of the castle, and still sleepless and silent sat the girls. They had canvassed the subject over and over again, in its every possible light, till not a single new suggestion remained, and they were as distant as ever from consolation.

“ There remains but one slender hope, Johorun,” said the lady, rising from the velvet couch on which she had been stretched, and advancing to the latticed window—

"I have been agitated and vacillating, but the struggle is over, and I am resolved."

"To do what?" demanded her companion, somewhat startled at the unusual energy with which she spoke.

"To answer to my Maker," returned Noorun loftily, "for a heinous crime, sooner than wed an object polluted by murders."

"Allah defend us!" ejaculated Johorun in terror.—
"The daughter of Selim intends not any violence to herself?—O mistress, sister! banish all such frightful thoughts.—Even in this extremity, Providence may kindly protect you."

"You mistake me," answered Noorun, "death is certainly a last and sure refuge—to which I may—yes—I may have resource, when all fails. But the guilt I now contemplate, is of a different nature;—falsehood—perjury—Johorun."

"If falsehood and perjury," replied the unscrupulous handmaid, "could ought avail—I would promise faithfully, never again to speak a word of truth."

"And who would believe you, child?" said the lady, —who could not, even in her affliction, repress a sickly smile at the unprincipled zeal of her confidant.

"But what?" demanded Johorun, "is the lie that is to be so efficacious in this sad dilemma?"

"I should have thought," returned Noorun, "you would have guessed it. I will, however, tell you. The condition on which Omar released Alraschid, was, you must remember, my promising never to reveal his unnatural murder. Now I will be forsworn. I will straightway detail to my father all his discovered wickedness.—And do you doubt of his then grievously revenging my lover's wrongs, and the long fiendish persecution he has inflicted on my feelings?"

"Doubt it!" cried her friend, transported with momentary exultation, "who can doubt of seeing him swinging on one of the highest of yon mangoe trees, or floating after his head down that rapid current!—fool

that I was, not to think of so excellent and palpable a project!"

"I know," said the Rajah's daughter, "I am about to commit a heavy sin, and for which Alraschid would never pardon me; but I will undergo willingly the responsibility; when I remember that by keeping myself dumb, another is made equally unhappy as myself. Unlikely as it is, Johoran, that Alraschid and I ever can be united, still would it not plunge him into misery to learn I had affianced myself to Omar, without making even this struggle against it?—Is not principle, in such urgent emergencies as this, folly?"

"Assuredly," returned her companion,—"worse than folly, 'tis sinful. What! are two persons to be made broken-hearted for such nonsense? Come, if you require conscience company, believe me I will make it a duty to forge a fresh falsehood every day for the next month, just to make your mind easy from sympathy. Besides, my dear mistress," continued Johoran, "your promise was, I am certain, a conditional one;—for although I was much too frightened to remember every word which passed, I am certain you said, that as long as Omar desisted from his addresses, so long would you swear to keep secret his guilt."

"I intended so," said Noorun, "nor am I sure that stipulation is forgotten."

Here the fair casuists were cut short by a knock at the chamber door,—this, as both anticipated, proved to be a summons from the Rajah, and accordingly Noorun, having hurriedly arranged her partially dishevelled tresses, and thrown a veil over her head, quitted her apartment with a trembling step, which sadly belied the obdurate resolution she had taken. She found her father parading his room in a gloomy mood, and as he kissed her affectionately, and placed her on an ottoman, he spoke not a syllable. Noorun perceived that this chilling silence proceeded, not from any want of love, but from the agitation of his feelings.

"My dear child," said Selim, sitting himself down near her,—“that evil day of decision which we have so long deferred, and which I may say we have both dreaded, has at length arrived—a day on which much of my future happiness must be decided. Say, Noorun, have you conquered your prejudices—or at least changed your intentions respecting my nephew?”

"Father," said the lady, mustering confidence from the kind manner in which the Omrah spoke,—“How can I change my sentiments regarding him?—my antipathy is rooted on abhorrence of his heart and principles, and not, as you, imagine, on his unfavourable personal appearance. I can as soon love sin as Omar. But I beseech you, by every kindness and endearment you have hitherto shown me—tell me, why you are thus fixed on uniting me to such a wretch. I once thought I had but to ask, to receive a boon. But what avails all your former indulgence, when this refusal must eclipse for me henceforth every gleam of happiness? Oh, am I not still your daughter!”

"Allah, save us!" exclaimed Selim, his eye gathering brightness as it glanced over the expressive and animated features of Noorun.—“Why, what grounds have you for thus denouncing your enamoured kinsman!—Certainly he is not particularly well-favoured—but is he not talented—rich as a very talisman of the Genii—and does he not love you to distraction?”

"Alas!" replied the lady, "I have too good grounds for the opinions I have formed of Omar:—but say, is it for the sake of his sordid wealth you are thus inflexible?—Nay, I feel it cannot be—my heart whispers otherwise. My father could not live to see his Noorun for ever hapless, unless some other unknown unavoidable cause existed."

The Omrah, at these words, rose excessively agitated, and again paced the apartment in gloomy silence. After a long pause, he again threw himself on the couch, and taking the hand of his daughter, who sat pale and trem-

bling, he said, "My beloved girl, matters have now come to that climax, which renders it but humane, if not prudent, to explain to you the real cause of my adhering to a request, which seems in your eyes so cruel and unreasonable.—Could you bear to see these hands which so oft have fondled you, manacled with felon fetters—or hear of these grizzled locks falling ensanguined on a scaffold?" and his dry lips quivered as he paused for a reply.

"What means my father?" exclaimed Noorun, terrified by this extraordinary question into forgetfulness of her own affairs.

"Be silent," answered Selim, sorrowfully. "Listen to the guilt of a parent, and learn how hopeless it is, to extricate one's steps from the paths of crime. The commission of one being almost invariably necessary for the concealment of another, till the lengthened series proves irretrievable by repentance. Great—dignified—feared—" continued the Rajah "as seems your father—all is hollow, and resting on the instability of sand.—For all, my child, has been obtained at the expense of tears—by extortions, cruelty, and oppression,—and like all who have acted as I have done,—a heavy retribution is in store."

"Dearest father," interrupted Noorun, "your words—your looks frighten me. Is it possible those dark fits of despondency, which sometimes depress you, and which I ever attributed to the cares of public business, are the results of a wounded conscience?—No, no, it cannot be;" and throwing her arms around the neck of her passive abstracted parent, she hid her streaming eyes within his bosom. Selim pressed her to his heart, and for awhile felt too deeply his daughter's sympathy to proceed.

"Yes," resumed Selim, "my conscience is my tyrant—my executioner, in conjunction with a no less cancer-like apprehension of pending destruction.. I have no nerve to contemplate death—the wicked are never prepared to do so—and it is this unworthy cowardice, as well as an incapability of perfecting another crime of magni-

tude, after which my heart has yearned, till the very sickness of its longings has softened it; which forces me, Noorun, to require the sacrifice you abhor. My preservation demands that sacrifice."—And having said this he remained silent, awaiting some reply.

It was some time ere his daughter recovered sufficient control over her tears to speak, when, raising her head, and fixing her eyes full on her father's, she said: "If Noorun can be of service to prove the means of making you more safe and happy, dispose of me as you please." The firmness with which this was spoken required too great a struggle to be lasting, and throwing her arms round Selim's neck, she again sobbed loudly.

"You are still my own noble-minded child," murmured the Rajah, "ever devoted and obedient. This has been a severe trial to us both, but that it was imperatively necessary for you to give way, I will now explain. You are aware that my brother, Omar's father, was for a long time a worthy and wealthy banker in Ougien, who died suddenly, leaving a large fortune. His death, Noorun, was the first means of my aggrandisement. But it is the unjustness of the means by which I became possessed of his riches, which has since caused me much regret, and, amongst other involuntary actions, forced me even to offer up my daughter as an appeasing sacrifice.—Start not, Noorun, 'twas I who made Omar fatherless."

The young lady, however, not only started at this astounding confession, but recoiled from her parent's embrace as if he had been a Mahratta bandit; but filial affection soon regained its influence, and she sat silent, gazing on Selim, with a look of innocent compassion blended with wonder, till her eyes sunk gradually to the ground. How powerful is the dumb reproof of sterling virtue;—and how poignant is pity! The Omrah's heart blanched before this rebuke,—he grovelled in spirit before his child.

"You despise and spurn me," said he at length, "nor

can I blame you,—but I will finish, since I have commenced it, this most disgusting narrative. Unfortunately, I believe for me, I stopped short in my criminal career for a season; and compunction, in conjunction with ill-bestowed compassion, induced me to spare the life of the deformed wretch, whom I may say I had disinherited.—His mother, too, eluded my vigilance by flight. Years rolled by, and Omar spent all his hours in solitude and study, apparently unconscious of his history and wrongs—nor did I fathom the deep revengeful subtlety of his disposition, till it was too late to deliver myself from its effects. Living a recluse in my own castle, he has baffled for a long time myself and every inmate—held me in scorn, in thralldom, and in fact become its master! So incredible a truth as this, requires stronger corroboration and explanation than I can now give you;—but certain it is, that if I have a hundred times bitterly repented my foolish pity or weakness, which preserved his life, I have since as often tried, by attempting to assassinate him, to regain composure, and I may say independence.”

Noorun shuddered, but did not interrupt Selim, who thus continued:—“Every attempt of this nature the dwarf has not only foiled, but invariably, by the destruction of the perpetrators. And often have I trembled for my own life, in my greatest security; for, I believe, were he deliberately to attempt my murder, nothing could prevent his succeeding. I am not given to superstition, but certainly the ways and works of Omar are not as other men. He is familiarly known by all my household, as you well know, as a magician,—and sooner would my stoutest hearted trooper enter single handed into the lists, against an elephant or tiger, than approach his private apartments. He has, I may say, a fortalice in a fort,—his chamber is the heart, of which the rest is but the frame, dependant wholly on its actions. I, Noorun, can no more rid myself of Omar than if he were an unsubstantial ghost or demon. The first instance he gave of his immunity from personal danger

and overbearing behaviour, was bringing his mother, God knows how or whence, into the castle, and providing her with apartments near his own. My first impulse was to have strangled her, the next to dismiss her with indignity. But the dwarf boldly told me to my face, he would exact blood for blood in the one case, and revenge himself four-fold in the other.

“Next day I bribed four of my most determined men to destroy him, by ruffian force. They obtained easy entrance into his chambers, and that very evening their headless trunks were found floating down the Sipra. The strange particulars of his mother’s death, which to my great joy lately happened, I have already told you. I will now, therefore, having shown how perfectly incapable I am of removing the dwarf from hence, inform you of the power he possesses over me, and which renders it impossible for me to refuse whatever he demands.

“During the troubles of Shaw Jehan, it was no difficult thing for me, by a judicious and large application of gold, to maintain myself in my present authority, and to replenish my coffers by any means I chose. On Aurungzebe obtaining the throne, I have had however a much more difficult part to play ; and I must indeed be blind, if I cannot foresee the clouds of destruction thickening around me. My anxious wish has therefore ever been to see Shaw Jehan restored ; for I have little hope of long remaining unchallenged by the present Emperor, whose strict justice, keen-sightedness and rigorous punishment are proverbial. In every cabal, therefore, hopeless or feasible, in favour of the deposed monarch, I have taken an active part, all of which being well known to Omar, he has (not taking into consideration any family matters) ample materials for perfecting my ruin, whenever it should so please him. Need I say he has taken every advantage of this ?—Need I say, it is this which has frightened me from taking cognisance of many of his atrocities, the blame of which ultimately reverts

upon myself? Need I say, it is this which enabled him with impunity, and against my express commands to murder the peaceable old Ajimut,—to torture his wife,—and rase their cottage to the ground?—Or, need I say, my dearest daughter, it is this dire spell which must draw you from the arms of a guilty parent, or draw him to certain and condign infamy?”

“My dear father,” said Noorun, who, though immersed in a sort of stupor, had lost not a syllable which escaped him;—“however poor and ineffectual a screen I may prove, betwixt you and Omar’s malignity, I have promised to sacrifice every personal feeling on your behalf, but only as a last resource; for since it appears that the possession of important secrets, is the sole cause for your giving way to the dwarf’s unwarrantable demands, I also can make known one respecting him, which will nearly annul the influence he uses so domineeringly.”

“Indeed!” said Selim incredulously, “what may that be?”

“His own hands,” continued Noorun, “are dyed with blood.—I myself overheard the magician confess, that he had murdered Mootee, his mother!”

“Impossible, child!” exclaimed the noble,—“where, or when, could you overhear the words of your wily cousin?”

Noorun was rather abashed by this question, but soon recovered self-possession, and said,—“That I say nothing but what is true, Johorun can testify; but if my father will afford me a patient hearing, I will endeavour to tell him every circumstance as briefly, yet clearly as possible.”

“There is nothing can afford me equal interest,” said Selim, whose features fully declared his curiosity.

Accordingly the young lady recounted minutely every particular respecting the escape of Alraschid, which we will not of course recapitulate. So astonished was the

Omrah at this improbable story, that for awhile he did not put a single question, nor make any observation.

"By the sacred Caaba !" exclaimed he,—“these are strange inexplicable proceedings!—What in the prophet's name could induce two such hair-brained fools to lay aside all sense of modesty, and leaving the zenana, pilot their steps to the tower of iron !”

Noorun hesitated.—“We thought him innocent,” replied she at length, “and providentially saved his life. Though I pledged myself to Omar never to divulge his guilt,—as the only hope left me, I am weak and selfish enough to embrace perjury, sooner than utter despair.”

“Culpable as you stand in the eye of heaven,” replied Selim, “I must needs acquit you. Strict adherence to truth had immolated you,—it had been the lamb keeping faith with the wolf. Now am I a match for that misshapen miscreant. And now, my dearest little one, be not apprehensive of a further continuance of Omar's proposals.”

At this joyful assurance, the young lady threw herself on her knees, and embraced her father's feet, whilst at the same instant a crimson purdu, or curtain, which divided this small chamber from an anti-room, was moved aside, and the magician entered. So stealthy was his step that they were not aware of his presence, till he stood directly confronting them, when the flushed eye of Selim fell suddenly on his dark imperturbable countenance.

“Villain !” exclaimed he, starting up from the caresses of his daughter—“you are come in fitting season to reap the fruit of your wicked plots and dissimulation. . . this !” said Selim, smiling savagely,—“this, oh most virtuous kinsman, is my daughter Noorun ; do you deem her worthy of a parricide or some common hangman ?”

“The epithet which you so unwisely apply to me,” answered the dwarf, “may be excused by the uncommon fury which seems to possess you. Parables and riddles I am no proficient in, and what Selim of Ougien

may mean by hangman or parricide, I am at a loss to discover." This he delivered without allowing a muscle of his dark wizened face to be discomposed, whilst he listlessly sauntered about the room, as if careless of carrying on the conversation.

"When I called you villain," returned Selim, "it was because I neglected to call you the base murderer of your mother, of which accursed crime you took, as usual, special care to accuse me. Can it be that some small remnant of shame prevents you sinking to the earth, knowing, as you must do, that every particle of your incredible crimes and hypocrisy are laid open to me?"

"If Selim of Ougien," replied Omar, "intends again to commit a breach of promise, touching his daughter, let him not be so ridiculous as to adopt the foolish plea, of accusing me of so heinous and unnatural a crime, as the one wherewith I confess I unjustly accused him."

"Now that your guilt is unmasked," replied Selim, "you confess that your former pertinaciously denouncing of me, as the cause of Mootee's death, was of a piece with all your conduct. Think not, however, this tardy indemnity will benefit you."

"And think not, besotted, false-hearted oppressor!" exclaimed furiously the dwarf,—“that your unjust estimation of my character, or any anxiety for an intimate connexion with your family, now brings me to your presence. No, Selim of Ougien,—thou unworthy upstart on the ruins of my murdered parent, know that I once more address you as the scourge of that God, whose laws you have scorned—whose rights you have condemned!—I come once more as thy heart-harrower, to pluck from it its single solitary solace; to make thee tremblingly confess his vengeance pervades every shelter wherewith iniquitous humanity can diligently surround itself. To wed your daughter, Rajah, would be to

honour an unworthy family—a dishonoured, degraded family!"

Had the Omrah been armed, words had not been resorted to by him, for an immediate vindication of her who alone on earth was dear to him,—for starting up and nearing the magician, he would have attacked him, but Omar instantly drew his poignard, and holding it up, cried,—“Another step, and a stab revenges me!”

Fortunately for the roused nobleman, he was so confounded by the determined tone and furious gesture of the dwarf, as to recoil some paces, otherwise his doom had been surely sealed, for with Omar, a threat however dreadful was rarely unfulfilled.

“Let my tidings be listened to!” exclaimed the magician, seeing his uncle more pacified,—“for though I generally come sorrow-laden before you, every infliction which Providence has hitherto doled forth through me, is as manna to the gall now in store for you. You denounce me as a confirmed liar, but have not my lips too often revealed truths which have made your heart sapless as an exhausted ember?—But I have yet another cord to strain, which, if that heart is still malleable, will wring and wrench it till it breaks before my eyes like a cracked potsherd. Your daughter, Selim, is, I repeat, unworthy of my hand. Nay, rage not, nor gnash impotently your teeth,—my words can soon be verified. She is moreover altogether unworthy of your confidence and love;—for know, that same Alraschid, who escaped us, is the lady’s paramour!”

“’Tis false as thine own spirit!” exclaimed the Omrah, casting a tiger glance upon Noorun, who closely veiled, sat crouching and trembling on the same spot she had occupied at her father’s feet. Your motives for traducing my child,” continued he, “are sufficiently palpable—for disappointed hopes and fury at my discovery of your horrid crimes, may well draw down on her innocent head, all your concentrated hate and persecution.”

"Ha! ha!" returned Omar, "then you believe the unparalleled absurdity which your daughter and her silly colleague have trumped up, as to my confessing myself the murderer of a beloved mother;—and discredit entirely the strange tidings I bear, concerning the cunning son of Ajimut."

"As assuredly," replied Selim, "as I hate and despise the forger of such falsehood."

"Then permit me," said the dwarf with a mock blandness and taunting deference, "to introduce a witness on my part, whose testimony as regards my conduct, it will be hard to gainsay;" and withdrawing the curtain, he ushered into the circle his aged mother.

Had the earth gaped and delivered a breathless unsubstantial apparition, it could not have amazed Selim and Noorun with more electric suddenness than this. Supporting herself on her long smooth and silver-headed bamboo, she hobbled forward, saying,—“Here I am, brought to prove I am alive.—Well, that requires little pleading certainly;—what possessed the child to say I was dead, and slain by my own dear son, moreover, who, God knows, loves me as dearly as ever son loved mother?” This was spoken in a low guttural voice, and addressed more to her own ears than any one’s else.

“Am I now a liar?” jabbered the dwarf, as he threw a scowl of unquestionable triumph around him.

“All this,” cried Selim, striking his brow, “is sufficiently mysterious. I have been deceived.”

“Selim of Ougien,” resumed Omar sarcastically, “will perchance require equally strong proof touching his daughter’s dishonour?”

Selim, who had been gazing on the aged hag, started at these words, his thin lips quivered with emotion, whilst every muscle was swollen with the tide of agitated feeling which possessed him. Reckless of all personal danger, he was prompted to spring upon and strangle the cruel wretch who thus gloated on his distraction,—but the dwarf stayed him with these bitter

words : " Besotted old man ; liar or no liar—let that pass—there, read that precious letter, and never again know joy. Let it pass from your soul as fragrance from the perishing flower. Yet live to be a monument that Heaven's vengeance is irresistible, and inadequate to any benefits to be obtained, by ruthlessly scorning its precepts !"

Ere these words were fully concluded, Noorun had taken a hasty glance at the letter, and with a scream fainted on the floor. Selim gave no heed to her distressing situation, but holding up the paper with a shaking hand, skimmed hastily over its contents. Mootee, meanwhile paid attention to the young lady, whilst the magician stood watching, with a suppressed twinkling of his black burning eye, the gradually quickening workings of his uncle's features.

This letter, which had been intercepted by Omar, was from Alraschid to Noorun, and full as may be supposed with fervent protestations of love and constancy.—'Twas over. Had the Omrah stood there after a death struggle with an equal enemy, he could not have been more exhausted. Had he heard the first knell of settled death vibrating in his ear, he could not have appeared more suddenly severed from everything loved or longed for. Truly Omar's cord had wrung and wrenched his heart, even to breaking before his eyes. The sole remaining pearl of priceless value was stolen, and the world with all it inherits, was now to him but as hell's vestibule.

CHAPTER XV.

“Plot better ; for these arts too obvious are,
Of gaining time, the master-piece of war,
To Aurungzebe so known.”

DRYDEN.

HAVING shown the complete success of Omar's villany, with respect to Selim's daughter, we must follow him into other matters ; and in doing this, some preface is necessary for those who have not at their finger's ends the history of India during this period.

To any one, however slightly impressed with the wisdom, prudence, and power of Aurungzebe, it will appear almost incredible that the stability of his throne, which the combined bravery and resources of his daring brothers could not shake, was seriously endangered by the fanaticism and madness of an old woman. This was Bestamia, the wealthy widow of an opulent merchant, who on her husband's demise, had retired to the town of Naggur, in the northwestern part of India. Here she was surrounded by an incredible host of fakiers or privileged beggars, who shared her boundless hospitality, flattered her follies and enthusiasm, and under her patronage perpetrated the most disgusting enormities. Not content with subjecting the neighbourhood to their unprincipled rapacity, these wretches had the audacity to pronounce the Emperor an usurper, and actually arrogated for their frail benefactress the dignified title of Queen.

Ludicrous as this proceeding might appear to the generality of Aurungzebe's subjects, the Emperor well knew from what trifles spring matters of consequence, felt anxious at this extraordinary insurrection. He well

knew his precarious tenure of a throne, the rightful owner of which, and a parent, moreover, still alive, and anxious for its recovery. He knew also that many of his great and turbulent nobles, offended by his impartial justice, panted for an opportunity of perfecting his ruin, and reinstating Shaw Jehan ;—and he knew that even this absurd rebellion was secretly fomented by several influential Omrahs, amongst whom, of course, was Selim.

History authenticates, that profusion and hospitality were not the only means, by which Bestamia acquired such an ascendancy over the minds of her lawless followers ; for all India stood in awe of her skill in sorcery and witchcraft. By means of this reputation, she was dreaded by the weak and ignorant, and thousands of the savage zealots, who thronged her gates, were impressed with a superstitious confidence in her eventually becoming, through the efficacy of such supernatural aid, no less than what their excited imaginations pictured, and wild ambition willed—the subverter of all government and social order,—the patroness of rapine, dissolution, and tyranny.

Aurungzebe's ministers had all along ridiculed the idea of a superannuated beldame, occasioning by her witcheries and private treasure, any serious disturbance in the state. But the monarch who saw further, and who was from personal experience and inspection much more intimately acquainted with public affairs, than any person in his dominions, thought otherwise. He saw it to be the first blast of a storm, which if not provided against, and skilfully weathered, might, by disabling his power at the commencement, leave him to the future mercy of the hurricane. With his usual prudence and promptness he, accordingly, adopted measures for crushing in its infancy, this frenzy-hatched conspiracy as well as all its secret supporters. How this was effected shall afterwards be noticed, but, meanwhile, we must devote ourselves to something which more immediately interests us.

In the outskirts of the small town of Narnoul stood one of those large buildings, which, as is frequent in India, was unobtrusive and unostentatious in external appearance, even to ugliness—but the abode nevertheless of wealth and consequence. It was altogether composed of plain small red bricks, three storied, of an oblong shape, having a number of small unsashed windows, and covered in with long round earthen tiles, precisely such as are used in this country for draining, only of a smaller size. This unassuming and ungraceful pile was fenced in on every side by a polished mud wall, about eight feet high, protected also from the weather by a roofing of the same kind of tiles. The square, which was thus formed, was found on entering it to be surrounded by a simple shed of thick bamboos and scanty thatch, projecting from the wall; whilst another, of the same materials and construction, begirt the lower story of the mansion itself like a veranda. These sheds were perfectly crammed with a swarm of the noisiest and most uncouth looking wretches in the creation,—some hideously disfigured by art, nature, accident, or penance, were assembled listening to the spirited address of one, who with a white grizzled beard and scanty garments, striped with red paint, might be recognized as a Saneashah, or worshipper of Shivah; whilst others, who followed strange gods, sat apart chewing opium or pawn in abstracted silence, apparently unconscious of the shouts, chattering, laughter, and yells of the hundred dissipated, half-naked, half-starved circles which sat singing, drinking, or smoking most busily; others again, who had quarrelled, were wrangling—jabbering in furious and rapid mood the most passionate abuse, whilst a great proportion, unaffected by all this discordant din and jargon, were hymning forth, in measured chaunts, their praises and fulsome panegyrics of those licentious deities, under whose auspices the commission of every wickedness and extravagance, was esteemed by them as pardonable or acceptable. The space without these

coverings, was one dense dirty mass of disgusting vagrants, who were impatiently awaiting Bestamia's daily distribution of food and copper coin. The wild, rolling, and dim pewter-like gloss of these beings' eyes; their haggard disfigured limbs—their uncombed elfin locks—their barbarous noises—murderous sentiments—and maniac expression, resulting from recklessness of life and complete condemnation of everything virtuous, formed a picture blacker than human nature could have been believed capable of portraying, more especially when it is remembered, that religion was the basis, on which rested such awful immorality.

Through this motley miscreant throng was pressing, with vast exertion towards the house, a fakier whose herculean frame and independent bearing, showed him quite regardless of the curses he elicited, by incommoding grievously the ruffian brethren in his passage. Beneath one arm was stuck a large bent bludgeon, which at once proclaimed him to be Buccas, and in the other was that of Ramjohnny, which he was hustling and hauling after him.

"A plague on these glutton porkers!" exclaimed Buccas, who was now brought to a stand still, "stab me! if the fair of Hurdwar, during the bathing festival, is anything like this! We must, however, make way, should it be through the very carcasses of the ragamuffins," and so saying he gave a lanky, bandy-legged individual in front of him such a bitter nudge, with his muscular elbow, in the ribs, as doubled him up, and caused him to shriek forth an hexameter of imprecations, a full octave higher than his natural intonation, during the delivery of which his face was puckered up into the most emphatic energy. Turning to this and all similar vituperation a deaf ear, the lusty fakier pushed forward, removing from before him, piece-meal, the living barrier, till he eventually reached the door of the mansion.

This was not, however, accomplished without disordering Ramjohnny's wind and habiliments, which cer-

tainly were much too spruce for so uncourteous a congregation. The door was closed and barred, but after Buccas had given a few signal words through a small aperture in one of its panels, it was suddenly opened and as hastily shut after him and his companion.

"Heaven's blessing be with your excellency," said the porter, recognizing Buccas as he entered, "you would I fear have some trouble in piercing that ravenous crew?"

"You may say so, Chunder," replied the fakier, "but singe my beard, if I would not sooner make a pilgrimage to the Bagarathee than again mine my way through these stinking breathed Pariars. I smell worse than an ill arranged suttee from such horrid contamination. Are the others assembled, Chunder?"

"Every one, your excellency," returned the porter, "though they have not entered on business, for the Queen is busy in her own apartment."

"I am glad to hear so," answered the other, "it appears so inattentive and lukewarm, being late, though it would have been the fault of these tumultuous mutwalah* mire-wallowers, if I had never got within a bow shot of Bestamia's presence. But, my son Ramjohnny," continued he, "I must leave you here under guidance of the trusty Chunder, when, should you be required, I will myself come for you."

So saying, Buccas, having proceeded along a narrow dark lobby, was ushered by the obsequious janitor into an oblong court, which occupied the centre of the buildings. Like the outer one, this was on every side protected by a veranda of split or neatly worked bamboo, and on the most shady portion was seated in profound silence a party of eleven people; these were evidently composed of the wildest and most influential zealots of the infuriated enthusiasts, each surpassing the other in savageness of appearance. Buccas, having returned their

* Drunken.

congratulations, joined the circle, and had hardly done so ere the door by which he had entered again swung back on its rusty hinge, and Bestamia herself tottered in, accompanied and upheld by the diminutive deformed person of Omar the magician. All rose in immediate obeisance to their aged patroness, and a murmur of adulation and applause fell from every lip, as the hoary palsied woman with difficulty placed herself in the centre of this now complete conclave of her counsellors.

"My sons," said she with a weak inarticulate voice, "I am sorry we have kept you waiting so long, as circumstances require prompt, decisive measures; but Omar will explain how matters stand at present."

On receiving this hint, the magician stood up, and after casting an inquiring glance on those around, said:

"Brethren, and most trustworthy members of the sacred intelligent council! having carved for ourselves a bloody path from the walls of distant Naggur, to where we now are assembled, within grasp almost of the spoil-glutted and glorious Agra—our every step becomes of consummate importance; for, in the heart of deadly foes, one false step must precipitate us into certain destruction. Unable to cope with our irresistible valour, although the Crorie has precipitately fled, leaving us in possession of this his residence and a defenceless town, yet know we by our scouts, that having met a strong reinforcement from the west (and being perhaps ashamed of his own dastardly conduct) he is on his return to regain if possible his blighted reputation. Brethren, they must perish,—for when we remember that a numerous force of the Emperor's best troops are on their march against us, we must at all risk disperse the Crories: we must I say proceed immediately to their destruction." This resolution was received with loud acclamation. "It is my duty," continued Omar, "with becoming gratitude, to make known to the assembled council, every thing affecting our weal; however disagreeable personally it may be, I should indeed otherwise make but a

poor return for the honour conferred on my unworthy self, by being appointed chief director of our powerful mysteries and charms. I therefore cannot conceal from the brethren that our prospects are in some quarters clouded, and demand therefore our particular consideration; I grieve to say, several of our best and most influential friends have been disabled by fear or misfortune. The Prince Mahommed is a prisoner in Gualior, unlikely ever again to be at liberty, and my uncle Selim is deposed." A general murmur of astonishment arose at this intelligence. "Yes," resumed the dwarf, "his princely castle has become a blackened ruin, and he himself a broken hearted wanderer, a beggar, with a price upon his head."

Though these words were uttered in a sorrowful manner, a slight expression of satisfaction played over Omar's countenance, which a keen eye might have detected. It did not escape the lynx ken of Buccas, who sat chewing his betel with an assumed sanctity of demeanour, which infinitely surpassed all his knavish compeers.

"And from whose hands," demanded one of the party, "fell this dreadful thunderbolt?"

"A young minion's," replied Omar, "whose life, like that of a serpent, has been spent in producing poison for the bane of all that breathes. A newly minted favourite of Aurungzebe, named Alraschid, the accursed begotten of an old foreigner, who formerly lived near my uncle's castle."

"Bitterly shall he rue the day," exclaimed another ferocious looking object, "when he ventured to injure a patron of the holy brethren!—the steel is whetted which shall destroy him."

"And I trust," resumed Omar, "all that accompany him; for 'tis this young Cheetah who has arrived with the rapidity of a kite from Selim's still smoking halls, and joined the timorous Crorie."

"Such being the case," answered the former speaker,

"would it not be a proper occasion and fitting instance for a certain retribution and warning to all like him, being resolved on? In the disorder of battle he may escape, but the fakier's dagger at night is sure as the visit of the angel of death."

"The lips of my brother," replied the magician, "propound justice and wisdom; and if to me who am so interested in its success, be entrusted the enterprise, I trust by to-morrow's noon to account satisfactorily for my time, and our most uncompromising enemy." This was, with the exception of Buccas, carried by unanimous applause. "Having been so successful," resumed Omar, "in my requests for the public good; I have now a personal boon to ask, and one which will, I anticipate, meet with as little opposition—that is, my brethren, the disposal of Selim's daughter." All the party seemed interested at this declaration, whilst Omar thus proceeded: "Suppose not, in demanding possession of the Rajah's daughter, I seek to espouse her; for, besides the solemn oath of celibacy which I took on becoming one of you, I know, as Bestamia here does, that,

"Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide."

Such is not my object, but in truth, I desire to send her as a splendid gift to grace a proud zenana. Is my petition conceded?"

A deep silence followed, which was broken by the most aged looking of the counsellors:

"I cannot help grieving," said he, "that the only possible topic, which is likely to embroil the fraternity in a difference of opinion, should be introduced at a moment when we ought to be marching to the battle field, instead of wasting precious moments in unworthy palaver. Omar must be aware that the sole reason why the fakier's council have been inimical to his views, is their belief, that he intends this splendid gift for no less a person,

than the Majesty of Shaw Jehan ; the holy brethren, however, cannot consent to such a proceeding from one of their chiefs ; they recognize no kings—Bestamia is their head, their Queen ; her will they follow, her will they serve, her enrich. Let their actions be ever consistent, that they may afford no opening for misconstruction. Were we to dethrone Aurungzebe, would not such attention to his father induce waverers to think we contemplated his restoration ? Such is my opinion ; but if there exist any difference, save with Omar, let the vote of the thirteen be taken, which must as usual prove binding law.

Omar could ill conceal his rage and mortification at this speech ; but, without making any reply, he nodded assent as to taking the votes, which each gave by pronouncing for the dwarf his name, and against him Noorun. They were exactly divided, and it only remained for Buccas to give his casting voice.

“ My sons,” said Buccas, with most imposing gravity, “ it has never happened since I joined your consultations, that I have been a person of so much consequence as I now am, and though the matter which I am called on to decide is difficult, from the doubt being attached to it, whether or not Omar may have some selfish view in pleasing the Ex-Emperor, I shall acquit myself honestly, and to the best of my conscience ; and in the first place, I must inquire, should it be the will of this council that the young lady be sent to Agra, where is she to be found ?”

“ Give yourself no uneasiness, good Buccas,” said Omar, who could not contain his exultation at the casting vote having fallen on one he thought his friend, “ give yourself no uneasiness ; the damsel is in charge of persons to whom I can confide her weight of gold.”

“ I had too high an opinion of your prudence,” responded Buccas, flatteringly, “ to think otherwise ; Runjeet, doubtless ?”

"Who else," replied the dwarf; somewhat impatient for his decision.

"Exactly," continued Buccas, apparently irresolute how to make up his mind, and quite inattentive to the magician. "Runjeet, and his company are a trusty serviceable set of knaves—but—I have a request to make, if I may be pardoned for detaining thus long the council—"

"Name it," said Omar, to whom this was addressed.

"It is," said Buccas, "that I may be permitted the honour of avenging on Alraschid, our and your uncle's wrongs."

"Why such a request?" demanded Omar, who seemed surprised.

"My reasons," replied Buccas, "are plain and excusable; for, in the first place, I am anxious to do something to distinguish myself in the eyes of the brethren, having never as yet had an opportunity; and in the second place," said he, smiling, "I wish to ascertain if Omar has any extraordinary spice of selfishness in his composition." The significant way in which this was delivered, though with the utmost courtesy, hinted to the dwarf that it was dangerous to give a refusal.

"Well," said he, "I see the reason of Buccas's begging this boon before voting. However, settle the matter as it may seem good to your own judgment, I nevertheless willingly wave my privilege, and only hope you may be as successful, as I know you are capable and courageous for any arduous undertaking."

This exchange of duty being confirmed by the council, Buccas immediately gave his deciding vote in favour of the overjoyed magician. By this time the sun had slipped rapidly towards the horizon, and the aged fakier, who had opposed Omar's proposition, now required, with much vehemence, that no time should be lost in drawing out the host from the neighbourhood of the

town, and disposing of them in some sort of array, preparatory to the unavoidable engagement on the morning. The propriety of this was undeniable, and the example being set, by Bestamia and Omar leaving the room together, as they entered, the counsellors separated without ceremony.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
 Draw near them then in being merciful;
 Sweet mercy, is nobility's true badge."

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

SHORTLY after the breaking up of this brief conference, the word was given for marching. Bestamia's lofty banner was uplifted, and irregular masses of these unearthly looking fanatics, rolled slowly and clamorously after it to the spot destined for carnage.

"May a surfeit settle me!" exclaimed Buccas, as he and Ramjohnny jogged alongside each other a little apart from the throng, "if 'tis not a thousand and one pities, that I know not who is my poor father! how his venerable spirit would exult and be dazzled like an owl's eyes, by the wondrous wit and wisdom of his offspring! Here am I, no more a Hindoo than I am a hen, masquing away amongst the most orthodox of them, and worming secrets out of them as easily as I can squeeze a "pumalo," save and except the secretary of Abul Fazil, who palmed so knavishly his little brother Feizi on the venerable brahmin. I never heard of so passing good an imposition."

"Your hardihood," replied his companion, "does indeed surpass everything I have heard or seen. You have for the last ten years been vegetating in the very valley of death—a word—nay a shadow of suspicion would ensure your destruction. I wonder that you feel not terrified for a discovery."

"Custom, all custom," replied Buccas, giving Rustum a bang with his stick, which made him wince considerably to one side; "man can habituate himself to any thing; with patience, he might lead the life of an alli-

gator or salamander, and therefore Ramjohnny need give himself small concern about—the eternal fire: ha, ha!”

“However much you may ridicule the fools with whom you associate,” said Ramjohnny, gravely, I beseech you, make not a mockery of all religion, for it is only (as is too often the case) when you profanely scoff at subjects, which I believe and reverence, that your conversation is disagreeable.”

“I will desist then,” said Buccas, “but, as I was observing that habits identify themselves with our flesh and blood, and become essentials instead of auxiliaries to our nature, I may without any egotism to boast or be proud of, certainly produce myself as an example. Like a confirmed gambler, my days have been spent in a continuance of chances and hazards. Risks, which would have addled your brain, have been to me temperate excitement, and as a needle will sometimes float on the surface of water, despite the sinking property of metal, so have I been buoyed by those which ought to have overwhelmed me.”

“By my faith,” responded his friend, “I have undergone some hair-breadth escapes in my day, and am likely to incur more, but such a continued odds or evens for my life, as you have had, would I confess go far to the addling of my poor noddle; but if there be any gratitude in Princes, I should say you would be bountifully rewarded by the Emperor, for the valuable services you have done him.”

“As to that,” said Buccas, carelessly, “I believe you, Ramjohnny, have reaped the best part of the returns; nor do I grudge it, for, although you smile at my words,—defending the innocent and injured, and outcozening the wicked, is to me sufficient recompense, and my supreme delight.”

“Confirmed libertine and unbeliever as you are,” responded Ramjohnny, “I can still give you credit for the philanthropic motive of all your actions, where motives can in any way be adduced; but the extraordinary trou-

ble you have taken on behalf of young Alraschid, has much astonished me, for you confess that he is almost unknown to you."

"Personally," replied Buccas, "he is almost a stranger, but with his history I am well acquainted; he is a noble-minded young fellow, and I should have been sorry to see him nipped in his fairest promise, by Omar's implacable revenge."

"Then you intend the lad no injury after all?" said Ramjohnny.

"Assuredly not," replied the fakier, "I would not hurt a hair of his head for the royal treasury. My object in being appointed his murderer was to preserve him; and if things go well and I can devote time to their advancement, I may make him as happy, as he is now, I doubt not, miserable, but we will talk more of this hereafter, meanwhile give me a pull of that blessed flask of thine, which is ever as moist as the milk bathed 'Vishn pud' at Gyah."

"I am astonished," replied his companion, smiling, and drawing warily from beneath his scarf a respectable looking wooden bottle, "you have talked so much without feeling sooner thirsty. . . . as this, however, must be a parting cup, spare not the fluid."

To this, Buccas responded by a loud smack of his lips and a grin, which showed a profusion of boars' teeth; then stopping Rustum, he elevated the vessel, and his painted face, whilst sundry regular swellings of his muscular throat told Ramjohnny, that his hospitable advice was duly appreciated.

"Well," said he, wiping his mustachios and eyes, which slightly watered, from the strength of his large potation, "you will not fail meeting me at the place of rendezvous, and should I be sound, wind and limb, you may rely upon my punctuality; meanwhile, may every prosperity attend you!"

Having said this, and returned the bottle, the friends parted, Ramjohnny taking a western direction, whilst

Buccas mingled with the rabble, which had now approached within view of the Crorie's encampment. Dissolute and unprincipled as was the fakier, he had, to do him justice, as much generosity and kindness in his nature, as he had recklessness of danger; wanting those religious principles which are the landmarks of virtue and prudence, he had no chart whereby to direct his actions. Everything he did was the immediate offspring of passion or strong emotion, and though gifted with very excellent abilities, he as it were laid them on the shelf, in all his transactions with mankind, displaying them only in theory, and rarely in practice. A wish or sentiment rising suddenly in his mind, would divert him from what his natural good sense might have been reasoning in defence of; and this want of self-control caused many who deemed they knew most, to think least of him. The very unevenness of the tenor of life led by Buccas, was however useful to him; few troubled their heads much about him, thinking him too unsettled and flighty to be of any consequence in the world; and, though at first seldom trusted, he never found a difficulty of obtruding himself on every one's affairs; but when once made a confidant, he was the best of friends, or the most dangerous of enemies. No one had more cunning, was a more practised hypocrite, or more unfettered by promises or oaths; if the cause in which he entered appeared to him just and good, no endeavour on his part would be wanting to insure its success; if otherwise, every nerve would be strained, every deceit practised, and every falsehood fabricated to betray its interests. No bribery, no persuasion, nothing but his own fancy or pleasure, could prevail on him to enter on any matters, and even then, however he might hoodwink his coadjutors or employers, his bias in favour of the weak or injured party was taken, and their interests, unknown to themselves, craftily advanced; despising as he did every species of fanaticism, and abhorring the unexampled atrocities committed by the insurgent host of fakiers,

it may be supposed his natural inclination led him to thwart, in every means, their senseless and barbarous projects.

Though born a moslem, he had, at a very early age, assumed the character of a fakier—a deception alone sufficient to have insured his death if discovered; and, with equal courage and address, having managed to become one of the thirteen, who directed the outrageous proceedings of these wretches, he took especial care that all of them should be duly transmitted, through his friend Ramjohnny, to the Emperor.

From this sketch of Buccas' character, it will be seen that much as there was in it to condemn, it nevertheless exhibited some negative virtues; and it must be confessed that the jeopardy he often placed himself in, for the unselfish sake of doing others good, approximates closely to true heroism. He was now about to act under such an impulse: for, having once resolved on making his way through the enemy's camp, and piercing to the very tent of Alraschid, no danger however imminent,—no trouble however arduous could restrain him. Accordingly, leaving the boisterous multitude, he set out on the hair-brained expedition, with as much coolness, as if he had been going to attend the council. It was fortunately pitch dark, and, unobserved or unheeded by any of the straggling troops, he sauntered into the midst of them. Whilst, however, we leave him to the more difficult task of avoiding the numerous chokeedars (watchmen), and sentinels around the principal tents, we now turn to Alraschid himself, who little expected such a visitor.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ This is the man should do the bloody deed;
 The image of a wicked heinous fault
 Lives in his eye.———”

SHAKSPEARE.

IT had struck the whole court, and not escaped Al-raschid's notice, that during the customary ceremonial attending his appointment, the Emperor appeared pale, weak, and jaded; whilst his eye, which was naturally bright as the Golconda gem, looked languid and unlustrous. Even the slight ivory sceptre seemed ponderous in his tenseless grasp.

The broad arrow of death seems to fly fleetest under burning suns, and the summons of Azrael comes fearfully sudden, hurrying away victim after victim, to that dark mysterious gulf, without one presage, one momentary omen. Like a swallow he darts about, snatching indiscriminately here and there a miserable midge, from the myriads which are flitting joyously, in the bright beams of destiny, without permitting one reflection on its doom;—and perchance 'tis as well.

However, Aurungzebe was ill; one of those subtle tropical fevers had fired his blood and prostrated his strength, and, by the time he arrived at Delhi, the most experienced physicians had pronounced the crisis, as exceedingly unfavourable. The consternation occasioned over the whole empire may be imagined; many of the chief nobility left hurriedly the court, to prepare themselves for those tumults and convulsions which they foresaw must ensue, if Shaw Jehan (whom Aurungzebe likened to a chained up lion) should regain his liberty. It was now that Etabar, who succeeded the infatuated

Prince Mahommed, in the all important charge of his person, held the Mogul diadem actually in his gift; and Aurungzebe's anxiety regarding this confidant's fidelity, conspired in no small degree, with a knowledge of the plots, that were thickening against him, to increase the danger of his malady.

With his own hand, he made an effort to write to Etabar, advising him not to be deceived or cozened, by any of his father's factious and turbulent partisans, but to keep a still stricter eye upon his prisoner. Nor was this all; he had himself frequently carried into the chief hall of audience, and exhibited to the Omrahs, with some of whom he spoke a few words at intervals, to show, all was not hopeless. In such a momentous state of affairs, Alraschid's appointment was naturally enough forgotten or unattended to, and he remained at court with a heavy heart and disappointed hopes, to see the very cup of Fortune shivered from his unmoistened lips.

He, however, at the same time felt, what few of the obsequious hypocrites there did, a profound sorrow at the almost certain prospect of losing a noble and generous master. With feelings more deadening than ever yet had wrung his spirit, more especially as the thought of Noorun, "never, never to be bride," came across it, he was standing in the second crowded hall of the Imperial palace, awaiting to hear the hourly report of the Emperor's health, when a Peon appeared and demanded the strictest silence, as the Royal Invalid was about to be brought before them.

This was immediately effected, and shortly after, a door in the inner hall opened near the musnud, and Aurungzebe, wan and emaciated, was brought in, stretched on a charpoy of gold and ivory. Although Alraschid's rank precluded him from pressing forward, there was such an irresistible but noiseless roll of the dense mass behind, (each eager for a look) as to bear him fairly into the privileged chamber.

He had thus a fair view of the Emperor, whom he

could scarce have credited to be the same individual. Wasted as were his features, from care and suffering, his great spirit was unbroken, and his faculties unclipsed; and to some of the superior nobles he muttered a few words, the fatigue of which threw him into a swoon. All present now deemed him dead; even the medical attendants were deceived. It were difficult to convey a faint idea of the complicated feelings which then possessed the assembly, each one gazing upon another, with that vacant stare of stupefaction, which alike bespoke terror and uncertainty.

It was at this moment a low buzz ran through the crowd, succeeded by a scarcely audible whisper, of the immediate arrival of a learned man of medicine, who had performed marvels in his profession. Ere this interesting intelligence had ceased being bandied about from lip to ear, a narrow passage was with difficulty obtained through the courtiers, and a venerable man with silver locks and flowing beard advanced, bearing on his shoulders the figure of a boy dressed in an outlandish costume. A high cap of black velvet, adorned with sparkling gems, and a crimson jacket, abundantly covered with gold embroidery, o'er which was wound a dark coloured cashmere shawl, constituted the most remarkable items of his dress.

As the old man deposited his burden beside the Emperor's couch, the slight sibilation, which had prevailed, was hushed from expectation; but Alraschid's astonishment need not be told, on instantly recognizing the grim countenance of Omar the magician. He who bore him into the presence of the Emperor appeared, from the respect paid him by the physicians, to be a person of consequence and character, and the authoritative manner in which he ordered the dwarf to feel Aurungzebe's pulse, so that he might prognosticate his disease, showed that he was of the healing or astrologic art. A pin might have been heard fall as Omar, whilst every eye was bent upon him, handled the monarch's attenuated wrist with a

coolness and delicacy, which would not have ruffled a cygnet's down; after which he placed his long pliant palm upon his breast. Having kept it there for awhile, he shook slightly his black locks as if to say: "science can do much, but not pervert fate," and then whispered a few words to his conductor, during which, the expressions of both their features, varied alternately from hope to hopelessness.

Meanwhile, the king had recovered from his swoon, by means of the iced water and vinegar, with which his attendants bathed constantly his temples, and, beholding the dwarf, he involuntarily started. And indeed, well might he start and shudder, for few of the horrid visions which distempered fancy had, during his illness whirled through his burning brain, exceeded this appalling reality. But the magician cared no more for the sensation he produced (although surrounded by the concentrated power and splendour of Hindostan) than if he had been seated in familiar conclave with his own ruffians. He blenched not—and the calm deliberate manner in which he conducted his brief colloquy with the head physician, obtained for him, from every beholder, the character of being both skilful and undaunted.

This short consultation being ended, Omar drew forth a pocket book of chequered silk, containing various instruments and drugs, a small packet of which latter he tendered to his fellow adviser, explaining by signs and nods as much as words, the time and manner in which it was to be administered.

Scarcely had he done so, when a sudden and most uncourteous bustle took place at the lower extremity of the second audience hall, over which was heard some exclamations, little adapted for such distinguished listeners.

"By a leave then Baba!" exclaimed a gruff voice, "if you won't let the Behaudur pass, why your short ribs must e'en suffer; may I decry holy 'toolsee' if he gets not forward!"

Here the hubbub grew much louder, from the croaking

remonstrances of those whose short ribs underwent percussion, and great grew the wrath of all the official personages; it, however, had not the least virtue in quieting the intruders.

"Princes, nobles!" cried a firm but weak voice, "seize that deformed assassin! shall Aulumgeer, the shadow of God on earth, the protector of the world, perish like a cur? seize, I say, that disguised murderous conspirator!"

The sensation produced by this, tied every tongue, save that of Aurungzebe, whose dull eye having caught and recognized the speaker to be father Ibrahim, he shuddered and spoke something, which, however, none of his attendants understood.

The dwarf was, without compare, the least perturbed person present, and indeed his existence then depended on a very gossamer film; for had look or tremor betrayed the villain, he was gone. But his presence of mind never for a moment forsook him, and he cast his eyes warily, yet to appearance unsearchingly around, until they lighted upon the well-known Shaik Ibrahim; he then at once performed his part.

"By sainted Hossein!" said he, turning to the chief physician, "death and torments should light on these drunken or insane wretches, who thus dare with their swinish clamour to peril the Imperial recovery. Bear gently your precious burthen," continued he, in a low commanding voice, to the servants of the household, "as gently as if our blessed Prophet were in your hands,—this conduct is not more dangerous than disgraceful."

Omar took especial care that every syllable of this should be heard, and just heard, by the surrounding Nawaubs, and as he fearlessly followed the Emperor's couch, into the very penetralia of his privacy, their indignation was immediately directed, with extreme violence, against the authors of this tumult. Nothing, save Ibrahim's universally acknowledged reputation for honour and propriety, saved him from being handled as rudely

as he was reviled; and some minutes elapsed before he could be heard.

"Mighty and loyal nobles," said he, in his customary calm manner, after sufficient silence was obtained,—“if, instead of thus unjustly traducing me, you had secured that assassin, whose audacity rivals his guilt, you had saved your Monarch's life, and realized hereafter many a happy reflection. I am neither mad nor intoxicated,—that dwarf is a dire magician,—a reveller in blood,—and here stands one who can verify my words.”

“As assuredly as the blessed Bagarathi loses itself in the black water!” said Buccas, the fakier, who by this time had, with wonderful squeezing and wriggling, brought himself close to Ibrahim; “he is one, from whom you may as lief expect virtue, as dew from the hornet. If he be not a devil, then is he a king,—the king of all human cruelty and crime.”—This he delivered in a loud determined voice, accompanied by such a knowing twist of his painted features, as greatly astonished his auditors, although it at the same time enhanced mightily his assertion.

The tide of popular feeling now gradually changed, and Joy Singh, one of the greatest Omrahs, and most trusted by Aurungzebe, said:—“Be the truth as it may, prudence should never be ashamed at being mistaken. I will myself venture to secure this leech, and probe the matter;”—so saying, he essayed to open the private door, which was however fastened. After knocking for some time in vain, he hastened to another entrance of the palace, followed by a considerable crowd, and the halls of audience were shortly after totally deserted.

It was now that the door of Aurungzebe's apartments opened; and a figure in female dress, of plain white muslin, with its head closely veiled, after pausing to bestow one circumspect glance, passed rapidly through the chamber.—This was the magician.

It may not be deemed superfluous to state, that Omar intended poisoning the illustrious patient,—he, having

by some intrigues, obtained access to the Emperor's astrologer, whom, after really surprising by his learning, he induced to make a trial of his healing skill. Baffled, as we have shown, in his diabolical attempt, he, however, with his usual good fortune and address, escaped by means of the disguise, which he had previously provided. Aurungzebe, however, gradually recovered; and many petty factions dissolved themselves, as mists roll away before the rising sun. One of his first public acts was to ratify young Alraschid's appointment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought."

HENRY II.

WE need not indulge in comments on the young general's feelings, when, striking off with Ulluddeen from the forces he conducted against Selim, he hastened to embrace those parents he had but two years ago left healthy and happy. He might indeed have been puzzled to find the spot, had not boyish days sculptured it, as they ever do too indelibly on the heart, even for transforming time to erase all recognition. Everything was changed. In two short years, trees had been cut down, and an incipient jungle of gigantic grass and many worthless shrubs, concealed every vestige of the neatly trimmed fragrant flower garden; whilst amidst this abundance of rank encroaching vegetation, like some wreck amongst the breakers, peeped the smoky ruins of the cottage.

Alraschid's heart sickened as he gazed on the scene before him, and it was long before he could give utterance to his feelings. There he stood, perchance the sole survivor of his family, watering their ashes with his tears;—and in all probability the indirect cause, moreover, of their destruction.

"Oh Noorun!" cried he at length, "is this thy protection!"

"Blame not her," said Ulluddeen, gently drawing him away,— "the fiend who has done this, could not be
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stayed by charity or virtue. Let the prospect of speedy vengeance be your consolation."

"With Allah's blessing," exclaimed Alraschid shaking his sword at the distant turrets of Selim's castle,—“e'er long yon haughty battlements shall lie as humble as my father's hut!"

The poignancy of his affliction was tempered by the expectancy of revenge, and as they hastened to rejoin their forces, the hurkaru took every opportunity of curbing the intensity of his friend's grief, by fanning his most furious passions.

True it is, though the reflections which arise from the fact are very degrading to our moral majesty,—there is no pleasure sweeter than revenge. Under the influence of love, the heart is as a tree; its lofty branches agitated by the breeze;—but with revenge, 'tis as if a Titan hand had clutched the trunk, and shaken sternly all the woody canopy. It is too tempestuous in its paroxysms for our nature long to labour under, dissipating itself in action like the snake's poison, and yet like its fang, ever whetted for lethal purposes. It is the worm of the mind which rarely dies. Even adamant conscience may be gagged by a multiplicity of crimes, but revenge never can, as long as life and memory prevail. If we conceive that we have been injured, we insensibly hood-wink ourselves to the real motives for returning injury for the well remembered one, by that seducing thought of just retaliation; and from authorized judges, we soon become executioners, tyrants, devils!

It was to this universal and dangerous anodyne that Alraschid had recourse for relief, and which was liberally supplied him by Ulluddeen as they neared the castle. On marshalling, however, his troops at some distance from the walls, this was superseded by other thoughts, and even Noorun's attachment was but transiently remembered. He was now on the eve of the first achievement entrusted to him by his imperial patron, and on the conducting of which depended, probably, all his future

hopes and advancement. It was therefore with no small anxiety that, having disposed of his men, he sent forward the hurkaru, and a small party as a vakiel (or envoy,) to require the surrender of the fortress, in the name of Aurungzebe.

After a few hours, Ulluddeen returned, and reported that all his endeavours to enter into a parley with the enemy had been fruitless, and but for a few grim faces, which they discovered reconnoitering them, through some of the embrasures of the battlements, he would indeed have pronounced the place as altogether deserted. Alraschid naturally attributed this to some deep artifice, for he well knew both the number and excellence of the Rajah's retainers. He now ordered his troops, about a thousand strong, to piquet carefully their chargers, and, leaving a strong guard over them, he advanced towards the castle, preceded by four pieces of artillery, each of which was with difficulty dragged forwards by a dozen half-starved bullocks. To his astonishment, he found the bastions and ramparts all unmanned, displaying not the least appearance of military preparation.

No notice being taken of a discharge from the battery, and no one appearing, the four clumsy pieces of ordnance soon began to play upon the outer wall, which was not above a hundred yards distant. A few rounds brought a large portion of this crumbling down, and an easy breach presented itself to the besiegers. Through this, having taken every precaution against treachery, they entered, and found that the castle was in fact defenceless, and, with the exception of a few terrified servants, perfectly forsaken. This complex disappointment was more than Alraschid could bear, and after giving a few orders to search after the Omrah's family, which he knew would be unavailing, he sunk into a temporary stupor of despair. As he had conjectured, saving some servants and aged dependants, there was not a soul in the castle, and none of these could give the slightest informa-

tion respecting the Rajah, further than that he had left Ougien about eight days since.

Whilst our hero, lost in the contemplation of his misfortunes, sat on that very zenana balcony, beneath which he had won the heart of Noorun, the soldiers were dispersed all over the castle in pursuit of plunder.

In the east, rapine and conquest are invariable concomitants, in which all think themselves entitled to join, and it was not therefore strange that the young general, left even by Ulluddeen, should not have had an individual near him, when he alone was unemployed in the indiscriminate pillage:—the din, the shouts, the oaths, the wrangling of the soldiers, occasioned by the seizure and partition of their booty, all fell unheeded on the deaf ear of their chieftain, as lapsed in dark reminiscences of what had befallen him, in these scenes of his love, he sat solitary, motionless, and miserable.

Entered as he had been, by extreme good fortune, into a path of high honour and favour, and which he once deemed likely to end in the obtaining her for whom alone preferment was of worth—she who had sat on that self-same spot which he then occupied, and whispered her true unchanging affection—he now gazed vacantly on those hallowed scenes—an unfeeling spectator, blasted in each presentiment and hope.

In this mood, his eyes unwittingly wandered to the ruined bowly, that mysterious source of all his sorrows, when he was instantly aroused from his lethargy, by seeing a hideous figure enter its dilapidated mouth. He started up, but it was gone,—it had descended. Was it reality—or could it be a hallucination, an almost embodied dreaminess of unpleasing things, which oft course through the agitated and fervid mind?—from the state he was in, dubiety would have followed any extraordinary report of his senses. It might be expected therefore that he would stand for awhile, uncertain how to proceed; or whether he should follow what he thought

was the magician, but which might only have been a phantom of imagination.

As he thus stood, with an attitude and expression, similar to what a country booby contemplates some urban show, surpassing infinitely his comprehension, the whole earth appeared to lose its stability, and reel beneath him like a drunkard;—an indescribable dunning filled his ears—he was thrown forcibly on his face—a blaze as of a thousand lightnings whirled vividly around him, followed instantly by a deep solemn boom from the re-echoing heavens, and all was dust, darkness, and ashes,—an appalling miniature of chaos! It was long ere he could speculate on what had happened, or even feel certain he was but slightly injured, for he was deluged in blood; but this proceeded from a headless corpse, which lay singed and shapeless beside him. When the air became clearer, the castle presented on every side masses of rent and blackened ruins, interspersed with bodies, occasioned by the explosion of a mine or magazine. And now the din, the shouts, the oaths and wrangling, were changed to groans and cries of suffering, whilst in many cases the prey and the depredator were equally insensate. In a corner, amidst an assemblage of things, lay a bedimmed and sulphury bale of silks, to a cord of which hung a scorched human arm, the dishevelled sinews still and for ever grasping it in avaricious fold; whilst above, on a richly carved cornice, was stuck a grim face, by the adhesion of its brains and crisped locks, a most revolting basso relievo,—distorted limbs, flesh and blood, and turbans, scymitars, clothes, were every where scattered by the destructive element;—and, on mustering, Alraschid, to his inexpressible grief, ascertained that nearly three hundred of his men had perished by this calamity.

Scarcely had the rights of sepulture been afforded the unhappy victims, and the injuries of the hurt attended to, before a messenger from the court arrived with some despatches. The substance of these was, that after

having executed his orders with regard to Selim, he was, without a moment's delay, to set out and join the Crorie at Narnoul, in checking the insurgent fakiers. Accordingly, having left Ulluddeen with a party behind, to make search after the Rajah, and more especially his daughter, he reinforced the disheartened Crorie with all speed, as already mentioned.

Oppressed with thoughts and cares, which we need not again recapitulate, the son of Ajimut, after pointedly ordering his head servant Chunder to take care he was not intruded upon, retired to rest. He fell instantly asleep, but was soon awakened by something tugging at his arm in a manner very unceremonious.

There was a small lamp on the floor which was gasping for nourishment, like a fish out of water, and this, in one of its wildest convulsions after existence, displayed to his uncertain eyes a figure, sufficiently portentous to have made them expand, even had they been doubly laden with slumber. Within breathing distance of his bed, peered forth, from a profusion of long black locks, a visage, which resembled a handful of variegated floss silk, or party-coloured pennon; this was flanked on either side by a faggot of hair, and might, to an imaginative mind, have suggested a plot of full blown flowers, surrounded by a black thorn hedge. Squatted on the ground, this person, nevertheless, in some measure supported himself with a strong crooked stick, and his lips were as red as blood, from the betel which he diligently masticated. Further description is however unwarrantable, as he is by this time doubtlessly recognized as Buccas, the fakier.

Alraschid, who lay for awhile gazing on this unprepossessing visitor, and unconfirmed whether or no he laboured under some distempered vision, was quickly brought to his senses by hearing himself thus accosted:

"Well! may the fowl I curried this day have held my grandmother's soul, if you sleep not sounder and snore louder than myself, who am held a prodigy!—you

are a dead calm, with thunder muttering ahead—a sheet of lead.”

“And what the devil are you?” demanded the other,—“or what urgent business have you that I am intruded on thus rudely, and at so unseasonable an hour?”

“As to what I am,” responded Buccas, twisting into a smile his chequered chops, which resembled some huge bead purse,—“your eyes, if worth a couple of cowries, will inform you; as to who I am, that is a useless question, if you have a good memory; albeit, your never having before seen or heard of me is of small consequence. But as respects my urgent business, open eye and attend,—sit up! May this spittle of mine prove poison, if a robber would not have had as great facility in examining the lining of your windpipe, as in chewing a sugar-cane! supposing I had been such a one, ha, ha!”

“Supposing!” exclaimed Alraschid, in a towering rage, “you inform me, rascal, how you obtained admittance, and for what purpose? but surely,” said he, rubbing his eyes, and becoming less violent from astonishment, “you are the robber mendicant that once waylaid and stript me of some despatches.”

“The same, unquestionably,” responded Buccas, “and who could this night, if he had chosen, have stripped you of your very skin. Assuage, however, your present useless passion, for I may hereafter find time and opportunity to explain how that feat was accomplished by the Emperor’s own orders, not to me, but to Ramjohnny; for I was merely his volunteer assistant.”

The plausibility of this explanation, however, did not prevent Alraschid from determining to secure Buccas, and he was about to cry out for his servants, when the fakier, without a moment’s deliberation, stopped his mouth with his hand.

“Hush,” said he, “my son. I am here without

their knowledge. I have only a word or two to tell you of your sister, and then I leave you to repose."

"My sister!" demanded he, incredulously, sitting up at the same instant as much from pure exasperation as curiosity, "and what know you of her?" laying pointed stress upon the pronouns.

"More a vast deal than you do, my boy;" replied Buccas, shutting at the same time one eye in so knowing a manner, as completely to fill up its socket with the shaggy eye-brow. So matchless in drollery was this twist of feature, that his companion, in defiance of all spleen, burst out into loud laughter; and the mendicant, as was his invariable wont, chimed in so vigorously, as to confirm Alraschid, in a notion he had already formed, of Buccas being deranged.

He was again about to summon his servants, when the fakier, smoothing quickly down his perturbed physiognomy, said with a grave decorousness of demeanour, "Forgive me if I have trifled with your feelings,—but a few words—a very few words will explain every thing. Your sister, good Sir, is at this instant in Agra, safely lodged in the house of that clever, notable, honest barber, Ben Hassen, my ancient master. He, for the love he bears me, will take as much care of her till you return, as if she were his own child. You see," pointing to himself, "one of the fingers of the hand of Providence, by means of which she was plucked from the ruffian hands of Selim's miscreants. Ha, ha! I dare say now you are puzzled to believe all this,—but, may this mouth never again feel the genial gusto of arrack, if I lie!" and here he sucked in his cheeks, as if he had been gulping down a jaw full of the spirit he swore by, and during which grimace, one would have supposed his whiskers to have embraced.

"I am indeed puzzled," replied Alraschid;—"are you as sober as serious, in what you say?"

"Is there ochre or cinnabar on my face?" demanded Buccas,—“if a man can get drunk on water, on villan-

ously muddy water—puddle—then am I this day beastly, —or if it is a common divertisement to smuggle one's bulky body like a thief, through a host of most experienced hangmen, bearding old cock-eyed death, as if he had lost the use of his legs, for the mere purpose of telling a lie, (and such a senseless lie!) then am I indeed a liar of magnitude, one worth seeing, ha, ha!"

"You are as inexplicable a knave," replied Alraschid, "as you are bold and impertinent; but if not altogether crazed, recount the particulars of your story, and explain how you, of all the most unlikely beings, rescued my sister? But, first say what befell my father." Partially incapable of any modified or refined expression, as the fakier's features were rendered by their diversified decorations, a gloom of sadness perceptibly gathered over them at this question. After remaining for a short time silent, meditating an appropriate reply, and quelling the unfeigned commiseration which worked upon his feelings, he said in a slow impressive manner, which as much astonished Alraschid as his former levity:—

"My son, our efforts to afford consolation to the miserable are rarely successful, from our foolishly gilding our nostrums with what is abstractedly false or specious,—honeying the cup of bitter drugs, which puerile deception renders, subsequently, more sickening a remembrance of the draught. I will not act so with you, nor attempt subterfuge, where I can have recourse to reason, but break at once a dismal truth. If hope and all religion speak verity, your Sire is now in a better and a happier world, the tears of his son and the monsoon cloud may alike water his solitary bed."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Alraschid, "and by Selim?"

"No, but by his nephew's individual hand," returned the fakier.—"I rejoice, however, to see that you have sufficient philosophy, or manliness of heart, to bear so well this cruel bereavement."

"You have but substantiated suspicions," replied the

other, "which required little confirmation. . . . but my mother and sister,—what of them?"

Buccas now related, clearly and circumstantially, Omar's atrocious conduct towards his family; his own rescue of the females, and their subsequent reprisal; how they eventually got to Agra, he thus explained:

"Although it is an old established custom of mine," said the fakier, "to be the first to put in a good word for myself, you will be ignorant of it, from the small acquaintance you have had with me. Now, extraordinary as my behaviour in this business will appear, you must credit it without requiring present proof, as I have none, further than my own word. On reaching Agra, you will find, however, all I tell you confirmed."

"Proceed," replied Alraschid, "I doubt not I shall believe everything you have to say."

"You must know, then," resumed Buccas, "that it is and ever has been my disposition, delight, or whim, to do the reverse of most mankind; consequently, from this spirit of perverseness, I have done innumerable good actions, not one of which sprung from a love of virtue. Suppose not by this, that I cannot appreciate what is good; for it is the deep admiration I entertain for worth, especially where it is accompanied by weakness, which most generally brings me into the most strange collisions with human nature. I wind my destined distance through life," continued he, "in a by-path of my own,—yet by no means an unsunny one,—and whenever I catch a glimpse of the chop crowded highway beside me, I can see few faces so lightsome as my own. Liberty is my polar star—the common objects of ambition seldom enter my mind,—and the things, the inanimate things, which the mass of mortality account of price, are to me generally but trash; their butterfly pursuits, folly. So, an alien from many of the failings certainly of my race, and perchance too of their delights—on I jog unjostled, unoppressed by any serious cares, and even unheeded, till by freak or chance I come sud-

denly athwart some scheming, unfeeling knave, who to his cost remembers my uncalculated interference; and when I reach the end of my peculiar path, I believe I shall recoil, with much less terror, from the gulf which terminates it, than many who passed me on the broad beaten road, with the most imposing appearance of important preparation.

"This egotism, however," said Buccas, checking himself, "has little connexion with your affairs; so I will resume my narrative by stating, that having discovered how your mother and Rhada had again fallen into the clutches of their enemies, I was the more set on befriending them, from the difficulty attending it. All hopes of my succeeding in this, would have proved chimerical, had I not, after much persuasion, prevailed on my old and trusty friend Ramjohnny to risk his neck, in the unprofitable adventure. Nor can I too much admire this proof of his devoted friendship, seeing the imminent peril he thus encountered, merely for my gratification. You, I believe, are the only person who, after myself, have penetrated into the secrets of the ruined bowly."

"What!" interrupted Alraschid, "have you then descended its mysterious recesses?"

"Frequently," said Buccas; "accident made me acquainted, like yourself, with the magician's lair, though I certainly have turned my discovery to much better account than you did;" and he uttered these words with a cunning cock of one eye, and elevation of its shaggy opposing eye-brow, which conveyed to our hero volumes of his own biography;—and he sat gazing, from astonishment and conjecture, as to the source whence his information had proceeded.

"My time," resumed the fakier, "is at present too precious, and my personal security too precarious, to permit me to enter into any interesting, and certainly not irrelevant explanations. I will therefore restrict myself to the following condensed account. Having

discovered, through channels of undoubted credit, that the dwarf, a few days after the capture of your relatives, was absent on a treasonable conference with our council, I took advantage of this, and by the judicious co-operation of Ramjohnny, who, during the dead of night, managed to conduct the ladies to the apartments of Omar, I conducted them safely and undiscovered out of the castle, through the subterraneous passages which lead to the bowly. I myself was bound for Agra on important business, and they, trusting in the honour of a poor mendicant like myself, and having not a friend, save you in the world, gladly agreed to place themselves under my guidance and protection. Whatever depravities I may have committed," continued Buccas, "I rarely have taken advantage of those who were too weak to cope with me, and never of those, who threw themselves on my honour and protection. Your distressed family experienced from myself, and Ulluddeen, who volunteered his services, every respect, attention, and delicacy, which their situation rendered the more grateful; and after a long, very long, yet hurried journey, I consigned them to the care of Ben Hassen, the honest barber, in Agra; in whose hands, from the love he bears me, they are as secure and comfortable, as if they had been his own nearest and dearest kindred."

There is something in sterling truth, which to the justly suspicious, is difficult of being feigned even by the most artful; and it was this, putting aside Buccas' want of motive for deception, and corroborating mention of the dwarf's chambers, which dispelled every shadow of incredulity on the part of Alraschid. He, accordingly, with many protestations of gratitude, embraced affectionately his visitor, of whom he had at first formed a most unworthy estimate.

"By the milk-maid loving Krishna!" exclaimed Buccas, with one of his broadest grins, "virtue must indeed be prodigiously beautiful, seeing it makes even a poor painted fakier worthy of so friendly a greeting. But spare your

compliments, which I little deserve, and as my story must be but short, let me proceed to other matters which I have to unfold.—Have you no questions to put to me on matters which deeply interest you?”—and he wound up this interrogatory with such a sly penetrating look, as a profound pedagogue assumes, who has just put a poser to one of his most advanced pupils.

“Indeed!” replied Alraschid, “now that you have satisfied, and made me happy, as to the situation of my mother and sister, I am aware of no further inquiries I have to make, unless it were to gratify my curiosity, as to how you became acquainted with the secret entrance of the castle, and above all, were aware that I was unfortunate by means of that same discovery.”

“Ho, ho!” said the fakier, reinforcing his penetrating leer, which was as sharp as a cobbler’s awl,—“what! is the knavish Rajah’s lovely daughter, then, so soon forgotten?”

The blood mantled in the young man’s cheek, and his voice faltered, as he exclaimed, “In heaven’s name, what of Noorun?—how can you know anything concerning her?”

“Be patient,” replied his companion, “and I will unfold the most incredible occurrences. What do you think of me (after a zealous competition for the selection) being appointed to murder you this very night, immediately too after I had consigned, by my casting vote, Selim’s daughter to perpetual infamy?”

Although Alraschid could not again help suspecting that the mendicant’s senses were disordered, his sickening anxiety to hear of Noorun denied any continuance of such reflections, and he urgently begged Buccas to explain himself.

“You know, as well as I do,” resumed he, deliberately, “that Omar has long sought Noorun’s hand, and that he once nearly murdered his mother, (whom he rightly supposes has opposed that union) during some horrid incantation, in which he was fairly foiled. Of so

unnatural a crime, the thirteen counsellors, who direct our affairs are aware, and, as well for their upholding a vow of celibacy each is obliged to take—as dislike to the magician—affection for his parent—and political motives, they have all along inhibited this marriage. Omar durst not for his life act in opposition to their directions. This very day, he again brought the subject before the council, of which I am a member; when it happened that the votes were exactly balanced, and I settled the matter by deciding it in his favour.”

“You did!” exclaimed Alraschid, starting up with the fury of a madman,—“were you vile enough to doom the hapless girl to ignominy, and thus tell me your villainy!”

“Stay your unjust rage!” interrupted Buccas, “till I make you acquainted with the reason of my apparently unprincipled conduct. Let me tell you, that the destruction of Selim’s princely castle, and his flight from it, occasioned by your hasty advances against him, was all known to our council, and discussed; and, from his being one of our staunchest supporters, brought, as you may suppose, their direst indignation against you. Your rapid conjunction with the Crorie brought this to its highest pitch; it was unanimously agreed that you should be marked out as a victim, and Omar himself undertook this night to destroy you. The united brethren seldom have permitted one, thus singled out, to escape their proscription; the magician’s pledged word of death has never yet been broken. I had resolved, if possible, to save your life, if I could do so, without bringing mine own into jeopardy, by arousing a suspicion of my intentions; and when Omar found that his obtaining the council’s sanction to his marriage, rested altogether with me, he was forced, though reluctantly, to consign over to me the duty, which had just devolved on him, of this night assassinating you. Had I not therefore done what I have done, and stipulated as I did stipulate, you had been now weltering in your blood. For, if Buccas, the unwieldly

fakier, can thus steal into your tent, and sit down calmly to count your snores, with what facility would the dwarf have had your head off, before your eyes could have opened to observe his dexterity!"

"Sooner, Buccas," exclaimed the other, "would I have died by that wretch's hand, than you should have devoted the daughter of Selim to such a destiny! little know you the misery you have occasioned."

"Is my bushy head, then," interrupted the fakier, "no better than an unripe pumpkin, which decorates a pariah's mud wall? do you think I would incur risk and trouble to benefit you at the expense of another, in whom I feel an equal interest as yourself? This would indeed be sheer apprentice work in philanthropy. No, no; if I stand with one leg in either balance, catch me bringing myself plump on my nose, by lifting up one leg at a time. May pork be my eternal portion here and hereafter; if my giving away the young lady is not the bringing her back; the taking her away from you, in fact, the actual preserving of her for you, who alone ought to obtain her!"

And, having propounded this strange enigma, he rolled his huge roguish eye over Alraschid's puzzled features. furling at the same time his physiognomy, into such a succession of tints, as surpassed the prism of any philosopher.

"Eccentric as you are," returned his companion, "you have now carried your humour to a height which must make me question your rationality; put me in possession of a hope, the most distant hope, that you are serious in what you say, and—"

"Time is gold to me," interrupted Buccas; "listen with attention, and my mystery is soon unfolded; you must not suppose, my son, that the magician has wooed thus perseveringly his lovely cousin from affection? no, his love is interest; his feigned idolatry, policy.—Omar means Noorun as a present for one, whose cause he has at heart, and that individual is the dethroned Emperor, Shaw Jehan!"

"The wretch! the remorseless wretch," exclaimed Alraschid. "Oh! does his depravity reach to such unhallowed extremes!"

"It does," responded the fakier, with great composure, "but as extremes often meet, his villany ends in the consummation of virtue, and the adjudication of justice. Few days will elapse, after to-morrow's rencontre, before the Omrah's lovely child and your betrothed," laying a stress on the words, "shall be on her tearful route to Agra; we will waylay her accursed convoy, and may my muscles turn muslin!" said he, brandishing his formidable stick, "if we beat not the ribs of the ruffians, as if they were old dusty carpets. Oh, what a backhander I will give the first ill born knave I light upon!" and from the energy occasioned by his abstract idea of their punishment, he caused his weapon to figure in the air, with such velocity and force as to buzz like a cloud of foraging mosquitoes.

"This moment, this very moment," exclaimed Alraschid, "we will start—but," continued he, after a little recollection, "I dare not leave my men; no, my honour would indeed be lost, were I to do so on the eve of battle."

"It will be soon enough after the conflict is over," returned the fakier, "and not till then, could you have my guidance and co-operation. But now that I have fully satisfied your curiosity, and proved myself the means of directly saving your life, and indirectly saving your sister, (if things turn out well,) let me also endeavour to preserve the officer;—you must not go forth to the strife to-morrow."

"Not go forth!" said Alraschid, "and wherefore?"

"Because," responded Buccas, with a vivacity which his apparent anxiety for shortening the interview somewhat repressed, "if you do, you will in all likelihood have your face disfigured, your crown cracked, or your sides pounded into a jelly, after getting your sleek Arabian murdered. Believe me, better at once stretch your-

self on a bed of iron spikes, or swing, fakier fashion, by the skin of your back, on the rapidly revolving bamboo, or even get mortal drunk ; anything, in short, but venture amongst the invincible followers of Bestamia. They are savage as panthers, impetuous as the gusty monsoon, and lap blood like the insatiable sands of Zahara !”

“ Let each of them,” replied Alraschid, “ be a very Shivah, I trust to-morrow’s sun shall see their destruction.”

“ No more than he shall behold a second churning of the sea,” cried Buccas ; “ suppose not I seek to intimidate you without sufficient reason. To-morrow you may see me in their ranks, and trust me were I not sure victory must wave her wings over them, you would not find my saintly, seemly person figuring amongst them. Nor,” continued he, “ let stubbornness induce you to despise this excellent counsel ; for that is the seed of innumerable calamities, as my hack’s hide, were it gifted with speech, would testify. Be persuaded, therefore ; and join not in the fray ; for as certainly as I hold in my hand this crooked staff, will the poor fool-hardy Crorie be worsted, and probably all his weak followers slain, plundered, devoured. They are sparrows before the hawk, the small inefficient drizzle to the heavy clattering rain—ha, ha !” continued Buccas, tightening his cumerbund, as if preparatory for departure, “ poor puny pullets ! the cooks are looking after ye—but a little while, and your cramped feet shall be turned imploringly upwards——”

“ You are the most extraordinary of men,” said Alraschid, “ oft speaking most wisdom when wildest and most extravagant—nothing, however, shall prevent me doing my duty to-morrow to my sovereign, if the finger of Destiny herself pointed out death. I will die, but I shall not be dishonoured.”

“ Well,” said Buccas, “ I must at all events, for the present, leave you. I will find you out wherever you are after the engagement, dead or alive ; and, if a sur-

vivor, will concoct plans for rescuing Selim's daughter ; be prudent, however, and appreciate my advice ; at least, fall not again asleep without well considering the matter. My remuneration is, that you will not disturb any of your servants till I am fairly out of this dangerous place."

Having said this, and received a promise to that effect, he lifted up the lower part of the tent, so as just to permit his crawling through on his belly, and after giving one keen circumspect peep around, he glided away like a ghost—undiscovered by all outside.

"Well," thought Alraschid, when the fakier had fairly departed, "this is as extraordinary an adventure as e'er befell me ; truly, what trust-worthy scoundrels are mine ! had this eccentric well-disposed being been a thief, an assassin, such as Omar, I should never more have troubled them with this internal ejaculation." He now jumped out of bed, and picking up a heavy brass headed bamboo, proceeded to the outer front of the tent, where he found his two watchmen, and more especially Chunder, notoriously fast asleep, snoring as nasally as if it had been their undoubted prerogative. To their knotty pates he forthwith applied some tremendous bangs, which caused them to jump up with extraordinary alacrity.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Now havyng done our mattynes and our vowes,
 Lette us for the intended fyghte be boune,
 And everyche champyone potte the joyous crowne,
 Of certaine masterschyppe upon his glestreying browes.”
 OLD POET.

Is it fact or merely fancy, that nature is truly zealous in offering her morning orisons to a beneficent creator?—is it only the buoyancy of an invigorated body, or the sublime sentiment of an universal soul? I never could help believing, as I have brushed away the summer dews along the margin of some majestic wood, and listened to the universal carol of the birds—the bleating of flocks—the lowing of herds—and perchance the distant barking of a dog—but that each did worship after its kind. It is a simple idea, yet one ever cherished by me; even the rustling of the dense leaves has hailed with its small voice the noble cheerful sun—fit priest for so sublime a temple!—but to resume our story:—

The first dawn of morning beheld the mummied but good-natured Chunder, clothes in hand, awakening his master, who, being in a few minutes completely armed and dressed, rode off to inspect a division of troops which the Crorie had placed under his command. These were already drawn up with his own, in a long irregular line, and were composed of an ill-clad, ill-armed, dispirited rabble, which had been most unwillingly compelled to enlist themselves in this hostile array, from the neighbouring fields, of which they were either cultivators or herdsmen. Scarcely had this sim-

ple disposition of battle been effected, before the insurgents advanced with the most frightful noises; some imitated the howling of Pariah dogs, others the thrilling nightly yells of resurrectionary jackals, and these were at intervals drowned by the most piercing cries—shouts—curses—exclamations, jingling of bells—crashing of brazen instruments—blowing of shrill trumpets, and rolling of drums. In all this fiendish uproar, the Crorie's forces were not behindhand. Savage and terrific as was the din which heralded their advent, it was nothing in comparison with the hideousness of their appearance; a number were stark naked, their bodies smeared with unguents, or fantastically daubed with various colours, whilst, devoid of turbans, their long dishevelled hair hung down over their shoulders. In their weapons, there was no more regularity than in their appearance; few troubled themselves with defensive armour; and matchlocks—sabres—clubs—spears—bows and javelins, were indiscriminately intermixed. The point in which they most accorded, was the endeavour of each to outvie his neighbour, in a wild, extravagant barbarity of look and demeanour; there were indeed many really mad, who were the most daring and unearthly looking of the crew; these had bloodshot burning eyes, partly curtained by long oily elf locks.

In fact, as much from the excitement of circumstances, as from the intoxicating mastications which they freely chewed, the whole fantastic body had a semblance of fierce derangement; but, beneath this maniacal dash, there was an equally general spirit of high superiority and confidence in their own energies. Some, during the very onset, capered and tumbled about, like wrestlers before commencing their diversion, and several knots were loudly chanting the prowess, the feats, the matchless valour, and the supernatural assistance enjoyed by the holy fakiers. Such is an imperfect description of this infatuated multitude, which, with the shrieks, passions, and intentions of demons, now rushed forward,

reckless of all danger. Their impetuous onset was, however, well received by the Crorie's forces, and he, being a spirited little man, set them a noble example of personal bravery; but this did not endure long, for the rebels had an auxiliary which awaited them more than courage or impetuosity. It was well known that Bestamia's study, and almost sole occupation, was magic, and on a certain day of the moon, she was known to prepare a horrid spell which made her followers invincible and even sometimes invisible.* A rumour of these unholy means of conquest had previously made an impression on the government troops, which was confirmed and heightened by the wonderful ferocity of the fakiers, their total want of fear, and unsparing cruelty. Terror now succeeded uncertainty; till at last an universal panic pervaded the Emperor's men, and they began to waver.

The force Alraschid commanded, being, as we already said, composed of the very dregs of the army, was the first to give ground; in vain he shouted, threatened, entreated; they gradually gave way, faster and faster, till a general rout succeeded. Burning with shame and indignation, their leader, with his own resolute band, stemmed for awhile the overwhelming torrent, but all was useless; even his own horsemen, oppressed by numbers, were forced to flee, and he himself was instantly hemmed in by the enemy. One brief gaze, around the maddened crew, was all that was permitted him, for half a dozen different kinds of murderous implements, were at once uplifted, and he fell senseless amongst their feet. The last thing he remembered was an unseemly painted face he had seen before, with its owner striding over him, and flourishing on every side an immense crooked stick, with the vigour and precision of a wind-mill.

* Historical fact.

CHAPTER XX.

"As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in high'st, behold him where he lies."

MILTON.

ON recovering his senses, Alraschid became aware from weakness, as well as the state of his clothes, which were covered with blood, that the deep gash he had received in the head, must in all probability have proved his death, but for the kindness of some one who had bound a scarf around it. The first thoughts which passed through his mind were sufficiently painful. To be unfortunate was no longer a novelty; but to be cast on a sick bed, perchance a death-bed, when on the eve of rescuing Noorun, was indeed a harrowing reflection. After revolving in his mind the motley changes of his life, he could not help repeating first the words of Prince Mahommed, "Beware, Alraschid, how you fall in love,"—and afterwards the no less ominous distich of Omar's mother :

"Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide."

"I and destiny," thought he, "are I fear at cross purposes."

He was now stretched on a coarse grey blanket, in a dark hut, the floors and walls of which were literally plastered with cow-dung—It was night, and close by, with her back towards him, sat a very old woman, who, by the aid of a red earthen lamp, was preparing some cotton and plantain bandages.

"Ah, five thousand bodies!" muttered she to herself,

"and but three hundred fakiers. Hot strife—quick death!—the gods indeed work out their own decrees. If Bestamia is fated to be queen, what may oppose it?—five thousand bodies!"—here she exerted herself in trimming with a small pointed splinter of bamboo, the wick of her rude lamp, having done which she turned round to apply the bandage.

Had the thews of Alraschid's powerless limbs permitted him, he had started then from his couch on beholding the apparition of Omar's murdered mother!—Though the ejaculation which escaped him was inaudible, the glassy glare of his expanded eyes conveyed to Mootee all his astonishment.

"Yes, well may you be amazed," said the feeble sorceress, "at again seeing one whose blood you once saw flow as freely as your own. Poor fortune-tortured fool!—you have suffered by attempting to prolong for me a few deciduous years;—and, though I am styled cruel, though my name is tigress, I will for once do a kindness—kindness!—a pest on the word,—I will do my pleasure. Great spirit!" continued the enchantress, assuming a look and attitude profoundly devotional, "Thou whom I have served long and faithfully—behold, I now beseech a charm.—Vouchsafe virtue to this fillet,—that it may have healing over this fever-famished frame, that it may extinguish the flame of death which now exsiccates this fair young clay! Death—insatiate death," continued she, rambling away into a soliloquy, as was her custom, "shame upon thy greed—thou art avaricious;—am not I and thousands of coeval beings more fit to fill the charnel maw of such an eyeless, chapless monster as thou, than beauteous clods like this?—fastidious, forsooth! Ha, ha; fastidious!—foolish unfortunate!"—continued the beldame, her mind now wandering to her patient. "You started life as all your race have done, purposing like the summer's sun to path it over scenes of loveliness and enjoyment,—how rudely darkened is thy disk!"

"Eighty years have now for me encircled the race course of time," continued she shaking her silvery tresses from her platted brow, "and the moral of my existence is,—the sooner, the better, ended. Death then, is after all a friend?—ha! calumniated, fastidious death proves then our only friend.—He is no hypocrite,—not he—no sycophant.—'Tis when satiety of the world, wealth, pleasure, power,—aye, even the longing after anything, comes over the heart like hail; when the body is but a hospital for frailty, and the mind is as a mouth without a tongue, a broken gong; 'tis then our only charitable, our only compassionate friend, death, who can bring solace. He breaks the bubble, and ushers us into what—who can tell?—Ha! poor fool."

In this manner did the aged hag run on, sometimes addressing her patient, who was too ill to reply, but most frequently soliloquizing; she, however, at last set herself seriously to the dressing of Alraschid's wound, and in the performance displayed much expertness and care. When this operation was ended, she bound his whole face round with pieces of cloth, as if he had been a mummy, leaving nothing uncovered but his mouth and nostrils. This was as disagreeable as an unaccountable proceeding, for his face was uninjured; and Alraschid made an effort to expostulate against so unreasonable and oppressive a swathing, which he attributed to some rite of witchery.

"In the name of the blessed Prophet," said he, in a voice scarcely distinguishable, "do not suffocate me; my nerves are already like heated wires."

"Were you," replied Mootee, without stopping in her work, "blood of my blood, flesh of my flesh, I could not seek more sincerely your safety;—I do so because I bear in mind what you for my sake have incurred. But I must tell you that you are at this moment in the midst of mortal enemies—the victorious fakiers. By something little short of a miracle, your life has been preserved, and it will only be extreme bad fortune, or your own imprudence which will now forfeit it. My

motive for thus covering your face is, to prevent it from being recognized. You must moreover maintain silence ; —let it be as the breath of your body, and be careful not to remove these bandages. I will leave you for the present, but shall send some attendants, who will pay every attention to your wants, and change these bloody garments. Accordingly, raising her skinny finger to impress her admonition, she withdrew, without saying another word.

Particulars concerning such invalids as Alraschid are alike tiresome and useless ; it being an axiom too well known to perusers of such lore as this, that the hero can never die.

It is enough to say, he was immediately furnished with a comfortable bed, clothes, and a nurse, who was superintended by a medical practitioner, a being certainly not so celebrated as Hippocrates, but who had one crowning excellence, of never doing harm, inasmuch as he always believed implicitly, the omnipotence of dame nature's operations, contenting himself with his own prognostics of recovery.

For nearly a week he lay in this miserable situation, without being seen by any one, save these attendants, and visited at uncertain intervals by Mootee. In this short time, however, the fever had almost entirely left him, and nothing but exceeding weakness bound him to his pallet. It was at the end of this period, he heard himself accosted by a voice he at once recognized, and slipping the bandage a little way up from his eyes, (as was now customary with him,) he beheld, parallel with his bed, the many tinted features and exuberant mustachios of Buccas, his quondam visitor. As usual, he was squatted on the floor.

"What !" exclaimed he, "peppered in the face ! as I live !—thanks to my good bandy stick, methought you had escaped all slashes, save one upon your sconce. Ah, you are a thrice lucky dog, in having any kind of ball upon your shoulders. May I never have seen the

cow's mouth, which they term a holy place, if the way you swindled death was not marvellous. Let me be sober during the whole Moslem fast of Ramazan ! if your escape was not a miracle, requiring witnesses—and the only one these righteous eyes have yet seen."

"And for that escape," replied Alraschid, "I believe to you I am indebted."

"My son," responded Buccas, "you speak sooth. I saw you fighting away like some ogre ; every blow of your sabre required undertakers and shroud spinners. I pressed forward, as fast as possible, but before I could get near enough, the multitude had floored you. With vast exertion, I then darted forward, and, striding across your bleeding body, claimed it as my perquisite. This, after warding off with my cudgel a few blows aimed at you, I easily obtained, and bore you off the field, swearing to each one I met, you were my brother. Ah, if you had but taken the advice I gave you !—But is your face much cut?"

"Not even scratched," said Alraschid,—“I am thus covered up to prevent my being recognized.”

"Indeed !" returned Buccas, "Ha, ha ! let my beard turn grey, ashy grey, if this be not a creditable device ! Why I myself," continued he, looking carefully around, lest he should be overheard, and sinking his voice into a very distinct whisper, "bear about this admirable specimen of the arts, (pointing to his own face) to hoodwink eyes which only look skin deep. Ha ! ha ! but you outshine me. I am but a painted hypocrite,—you—the veiled prophet of Kurassan ; and in battle, moreover, as notorious as Rustum. Yes, permit me at least to be a connoisseur in deeds of arms—this worthy stick I assure you," said he, brandishing it,—“has manured different tracts of country,—and, though I pretend not that it ever thrashed devils or dragons, it has seen great conflicts ; but never so hacking a sword as your's. My fingers tingled not to engage with it, but to make greater room for its performance.”

"You are the most eccentric person," replied Alraschid, "I ever saw, as well as the most contradictory."

"How so?" demanded Buccas.

"Why, in every word and action. You condemn the excesses, and reprobate the madness of these wretches, and yet are you not one of them? one, moreover, of some authority; if such can exist amongst beings more blood-thirsty, and wantonly cruel than beasts of prey."

"Am I four-footed?" replied Buccas, "or are my ears pointed and moveable? I perceive you are one of the many, who are deceived by appearances."

"When dissimulation is carried to the extent you practise it," answered his companion, "it bears too powerful a resemblance to the impress of truth, to be done away with by a simple assertion. Your generous behaviour to me, compels me to consider you in the light of a noble philanthropic person; but when I think on the society you seem so intimate with, your manners, dress, and mode of living, I freely confess I can make nothing of you."

"Ha, ha!" returned the fakier, "do you then uphold my verjuice tempered, atheistical beast Rustum, (which beast, by the bye, you have not yet seen) to be a member of this righteous community, because he carries about with him a painted tail? May toddy* fail to flow from a neatly tapped tree, (which Heaven forefend!) if I did not give you in my ledger of human nature, more credit for keen perception, than you are altogether entitled to. Perish all my procreation if I did not!—You will, however, learn nothing more of me at present."

"I know just as little of you now," replied Alraschid, "as the first time I saw you."

"Not so, if you remember rightly;" responded Buccas,—"the first time, I left you under the impression

* Juice of the cocoa-nut tree, a very pleasant drink when fresh drawn, but which after fermentation becomes very intoxicating.

that I was truly a religious mendicant! Have I not now denied being so?—and albeit, you hold me as being unprincipled to a hair—one whose actions emanate from selfish motives, or the hurrying impulses of passion—not feeling—yet you will admit it unlikely I should take all this trouble in telling an unnecessary lie. You may, therefore, credit my declaration, when I affirm myself to be one of the most bitter enemies these miscreants have.—Ha, ha!”

“Your words, joined to your behaviour, as regards myself and sister,” answered his companion, “make me doubt, as to what you are—and though I confess, candidly, it requires some stronger proof than mere words to convince me you are no fakier;—yet I cannot in justice or in gratitude ever consider you as selfish or unprincipled.”

“Enough of this palavering,” exclaimed Buccas, “if destiny damns me, in God’s name let me be damned, without hearing here the heat of hell calculated, or rather guessed at to a degree:—and if, on the other hand, Paradise is my doom, ’tis folly to anticipate its delights. May I never again prosper in extorting charity, if I think there be so great a difference in the moral excellence of one in a thousand, as to obtain for that one a houri hereafter, and for the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine, the companionship of devils; troubling, however, my head very little about the matter, I feel as unconcerned concerning the world’s opinion, as of the general course of nature;”—and here, opening a small brass box, he drew therefrom a piece of betel, enveloped in a leaf, and replenished his cheek, with an opinionated self-satisfied air, which bespoke perfect inflexibility of soul.

“I am sorry you are so determined an unbeliever,” said Alraschid, “more especially as you appear gifted with a persuasive eloquence, likely to beguile others. But let us drop a subject, in my opinion improper to discuss, and at all events unpleasant. What became of the poor Crorie?”

"Poor Crorie!" reiterated Buccas, "well you may call him poor, who now has nothing. May meat and drink be no longer sustenance for man, if his fat carcass has not for the last four days been a repast for bare throated vultures and crows; and now is it but a bare bone of contention for starving pariahs and jackals. Fat fool, what right had he to meddle with fighting and the sabre exercise!—Why, even had he escaped wound free,—motion, simple motion, was sufficient to have killed such a huge butter ball. But,—choke me with the tail of a bazaar sow, if here comes not Azmut, one of the secret conclave—who, the nearer he advances the enemy, has still his back towards them."

This observation applied to a being, who might well have passed for an emigrant from the spiritual world. He was hideous, as the wildest fancy can portray. All the innate nobleness of man, majestic sometimes even in idiocy, was expunged from his features. Barbarism and savageness, had almost eclipsed the slight expression of humanity, which nature had allotted him. He seemed a monster, perversely against the intentions of Heaven. Two large fiery eyes, starting in appearance from the wrinkles in which they were embossed; and a pair of yellow skinny lips, which lined, without protruding from, their orifice, were what chiefly resembled human nature. His cheeks were hollow as egg-cups, and the skin, which was unusually swarthy, was completely puckered with minute wrinkles. His forehead, more especially by the regularity of its sinuous lines, resembled a ruff. The eye-brows of this extraordinary man, directly intersected his face, running completely across it, without any very apparent break, and were bushy and jagged at either extremity. On each side of his face, and over his breast and shoulders, hung, like a wet fishing net, a profusion of black tangled hair, dry and dusty, which never had known shears. Emaciated, and disfigured with paint, and unguents, each limb might have passed for a bone enveloped in sooty parchment, had not

several winding excrescences upon them, the effect of cramp, famine, and severe penance, shown there was still some little muscular integument. The most striking peculiarity, however, in this individual, was the strange position of his head, which was turned everlastingly in the very reverse way nature intended.

This almost incredible deformity had been occasioned by a vow which he took, to maintain for a certain time that ungainly position,—to change which was now out of his power ; so that he shuffled along sideways like a crab, with his back and face presented at once, to the person he approached. To the surprise of our hero, Buccas rose, and saluted this object, with every appearance of ceremonious respect.

To this, the other returned a dignified and slight civility, at the same time saying, “Is this the old lady’s patient?”

“Yes,” replied Buccas, “and in a bad way he is. May I discredit the universality of death, if a spider’s thread be not strong enough to drag his body to the grave.”

“If his case be so extreme,” answered the other, “the more attention will be necessary in removing him; for, as this place is fixed on for a meeting of the council, he must be immediately removed ; and for this purpose indeed have I been sent here. To you, Buccas, I will entrust its being carefully done. But you must use despatch,—for the council will be here anon, and moments are as diamonds, when fifty or sixty thousands of our enemies are within two koss* of our encampment.

“Within two koss!” reiterated Buccas, purking up his face from astonishment, whilst however a palpable gladness twinkled in his eye, which would have puzzled him of the screw neck, had it fallen under his observation. “By dinner and supper I swear,—this news surprises me. But as no time is to be lost, whither shall we

* Two koss—nearly four miles.

carry this dying wretch ? if he be out of all hearing of your deliberations, it will be, I imagine, sufficient ? What if we dispose of him under yonder shed ?—for to take him out of the enclosure, might risk his life, and I should be very loath, I assure you, to incur the ill-will of his venerable protectress, by having a hand in his death.”

“ The shed will do sufficiently well,” replied his distorted companion, “ let him be taken there in a dozen winkings of the eye ; meanwhile, I will away and apprise Bestamia, and the rest, that this place of privacy is ready for their reception ;” and, with these words, this counsellor, for he himself was one of the thirteen, moved off with a rapidity, little to be supposed compatible to his gait. No sooner was he gone, than Buccas, assuming all his natural arrogance, and which had been thus shortly checked by the presence of one of the most influential of the fakiers, bellowed out lustily for the servants, who appeared with the celerity of spirits. These, under the superintendence, and partly by the assistance of the fakier, conveyed the patient to the fore-mentioned shed, when Buccas peremptorily ordered them to retire. To one who was somewhat dilatory in obeying the mandate, and somewhat disrespectful, he bestowed such a kick as upset him, and this he was in the act of following up by a dreadful application of his stick, had not the servants retreated precipitately to confer and ruminate, as to what sort of person he could be, who seemed vested with such summary jurisdiction.

Being left to himself, he, as usual, again squatted himself near the head of Alraschid's bed, endeavouring to relieve himself of his oppressive spleen by such exclamations as the following :—

“ Shades of my fathers ! to be thus bearded by fatherless hurrumzadas, basest of all born things. Let arrack rise twenty per cent in price, if all deference has not left this earth. What will things ultimately come to when caterpillars like these strive at importance ? Ya !—

However, I have only a few minutes to spare, and, my son, let me employ them in giving you a piece of advice. Your life is now in a fair way; and by attending to what I shall recommend, I trust to see you still more recovered, when next we meet,—neglect it, and I shall never see you more. Are you listening?"

"As attentively as nature permits me," replied Alraschid.

"Then," resumed Buccas, "mark me. You are, as you know, in the midst of a rabble, each one of which is a devil incarnate; but shortly you will be surrounded by the very cream of this host of iniquity. The misshapen mummy-like wretch you just now saw, is one of them."

"I supposed as much," returned Alraschid.

"Well, all my admonition," resumed the fakier, "is comprised in few words. Keep silence;—if spoken to, make no reply. Silence is all that is requisite to ensure safety. But, should you be discovered, terrible will be your fate,—never,—never more shall I see you."

"My situation might almost ensure strict obedience to what you recommend, without its being enforced by a consciousness of personal danger," said his companion, with a degree of difficulty, which confirmed the truth of his proposition.

"I wish it were surely so," answered Buccas, "for of vital importance is the observance of what I say. You will witness, in all probability, sights as appalling, as incredible,—or you may chance hear of them. Be accordingly on your guard;—and now, farewell: for business of importance prevents me attending the council; and accept of this (slipping a ring on Alraschid's finger, the tenuity of which afforded no opposition) from one who, if he loves not, at least—cares for you more than perchance any other person. You see I am not wholly, nor, I trust, either so unprincipled a misanthropist as you suppose me;"—and, grasping his young friend's hand warmly, he rose and withdrew, not before several screw-

ings and wincings of his painted face were noticed by Alraschid, who attributed them (and not ineptly perhaps) to something else than misanthropy or want of principle.

The shed in which he now lay may be conveyed to our reader's imagination as easily as briefly. It stood exactly fronting the hut which he had previously occupied, betwixt which intervened a square court, not exceeding eighty feet. It was nothing better than a piece of paltry red tiling, supported on bamboo canes, with a mud wall run up behind, and which formed one of the sides of the square. Few minutes elapsed after Buccas left him, ere he heard the overpowering din of approaching voices, commingled with the usual discordant accompaniments of drums, bells, horns, &c. A wicket, which conducted into the square, now opened, and a very strange procession entered slowly and stately ; after which much of the noise ceased. It was headed by an aged female, dressed in pure white, supporting herself on a bamboo staff, which had an ornamented silver head. Alraschid instantly recognised this personage as Mootee ; before her marched a menial with a massive silver mace, and on either side stalked two half clad savages whisking about chaumurs, which, as we before said, are instruments usually made of the snowy tails of Thibet oxen, fastened to silver or wooden handles, and used for driving away flies.

Behind, followed ten or eleven savage looking fakiers, conspicuous amongst which was he of the twisted vertebra. As soon as this select few had entered, the door was shut, and fastened against the multitude. Whilst, however, these exclusives proceeded towards the hut, we may recount some peculiarities which attended them.

The most conspicuous, as well as the most appalling object in this group, was a human skull. It was unblanched ; in many places red with blood or unremoved integuments, and here and there a few hairs, stiff with gore, still adhered. An old bent man, with snowy locks, carried on a stick this sickening standard, which was

fashioned into a kind of goblet ; and every now and then he raised his red rheumy eyes, and contemplated it with a mingled expression of rapture and insanity, during which he beat the earth with his feet, in a paralytic manner—that was, however, the effect of great mental excitement.

Another individual, whose face was quite disfigured with paint and unguents, swung around his head a human arm, which, from the blood that oozed from it, appeared to have been but newly severed from its trunk. One, equally disgusting in personal appearance, carried a couple of large living vampire bats ; another an owl ; and another a number of those large red throated lizards, which were also alive and strung together on a piece of thread. Others carried flowers and herbs, or brazen lotas, the contents of which were unknown. The rear was brought up by him of the twisted neck, who carried a red clay pitcher of burning charcoal, as also on his head a basket, containing a supply of the same sort of fuel. Strange to say, none of the party observed Alraschid on entering, and it was not till all had fairly got into the hut that one fakier pointed him out to the others with the strongest demonstrations of astonishment. An universal burst of surprise succeeded, which was, however, calmed by a few words from Mootee, and all the council resumed the seats they had quitted on the ground. They sat in a circle fronting the door way, (there was no door) and Alraschid saw, though he could not overhear, all that passed. Nearly an hour was passed in deliberation, during which time the name of Omar was several times pronounced, and always succeeded by a general murmuring kind of moan. What now took place, however, demands a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

“But the aged nourse, him calling to her bowre,
 Had gathered rew, and savine, and the flower
 Of camphora, and calamint and dill ;
 All which she in an earthen pot did poure,
 And to the brim with coltwood did it fill,
 And many drops of milk and blood through it did spill.”
 SPENSER.

THE neck-distorted personage having blown his fire into a fervid brightness, by means of a rude square punkah, made of nicely split bamboo, placed it, with considerable ceremony, in the midst of the assembly, which action was accompanied with so much gravity and preciseness, as appeared to our hero highly ludicrous. Not so what followed, for no sooner was this done than the aged man detached from its stick the carion-looking cranium, in which he was so well pleased, and placed it on the glowing embers with no less formality and gravity; our hero would have shuddered had he then known this to have been part of the murdered Crorie's remains.

Mootee herself now filled the skull with water, and all the party preserved strict silence till it boiled; immediately on this taking place, a general salam was made by the fakiers, and the mother of Omar commenced a prayer or invocation, imploring some supernatural assistance. When this supplication or invocation was ended, the council burst into an exclamation expressive as well of their assent, as admiration in what the hoary enchantress had announced. Another profound

obeisance, evidently more intended in deference to Mootee, than the powers she called upon, succeeded, and instantly afterwards the whole party commenced beating their breasts in unison, and chanting, in a suppressed voice, some solemn incantation. In a little while, the one, who had his face so superabundantly painted, started up, and snatching a large blunt carving knife, made a deep gash (incision it could hardly be called) into the fleshy part of the fore arm of the limb he carried; the instrument was too wanting in keenness to separate the piece, and seizing it with his fingers, the fakier tore it off, peeling away a large portion of lacerated skin and muscle. This disgusting fragment he threw into the boiling element, and resuming his seat, the whole again began to beat their breasts and to chant in chorus.

This was shortly afterwards interrupted by the rising of that fakier, who carried the owl, the throat of which he cut with the same knife, permitting the blood to flow into the skull; after this, he forced the dead bird's eyes from their sockets, and added them to the hellish broth, which Omar's mother continued stirring most indefatigably with her staff. As usual, another salam succeeded, and the zealots renewed their breast-beating and chanting. From one of the brass lotas, another of the crew now drew forth, with matchless dexterity, a large hooded snake; and, instantly severing its head from the body, ripped up the latter; whilst selecting some portion of the reptile's garbage, he added it to the other ingredients. After this, a herculean limbed personage started up wildly, and, taking the knife, cut the throats of two black hideous looking vampires which he carried, and, permitting first their blood to trickle into the skull, he afterwards added to the mixture their long skinny wings. This was followed by another counsellor's plunging into their diminutive cauldron, the string of live red-throated lizards he held, and Mootee immediately immersed them with her blood-imbued staff. The loath-

some charm was completed, by the addition of numerous herbs and gums, which sent up a thick reeky steam.

After this nauseous mélange had for a few minutes simmered over the expiring fire, it was removed, and the hag making a signal with her staff, all were immediately silent; she then harangued them in a long speech, which must have been replete with eloquence or interest, from the way in which it riveted the attention of her auditors; it was, however, frequently interrupted by loud exclamations, and was ended by an universal shout of "Bestamia! success and glory to our Queen Bestamia!"

When this discordant yell had subsided, Mootee dipped her long shrivelled fingers into the lukewarm disgusting concoction, and dropped some of it into her lips; she then repeated fervently a few words, and so extreme was the emotion she underwent, whilst doing this, that Alraschid thought her emaciated, age-worn frame would have fallen a sacrifice. She, however, passed round the goblet, and each in his turn followed her example, in partaking of the diabolical concoction. Another louder shout then succeeded of "Bestamia! eternal empire to the elect of destiny! Bestamia, Empress of the Moguls, and patroness of the holy brotherhood of fakiers!"

The general expression of the scene was now of so unusual, so fiendish a nature, as to render description impotent. Deeply scathed as were their features with the most mordacious passions, they were at present enlivened with a glow of enthusiasm; nay even a shocking mirthfulness flickered over them, as the sun's sickly beams struggle through the lurid vistas of a thunder-charged sky. It was a joy which arose from the consciousness of their own consummate depravity; which pronounced them outcasts from the ways and feelings of humanity, and, when analyzed, proved the index of supreme sin. The old man, to whom was entrusted the skull, now took up his charge, with every precaution

against spilling its contents, and left the cottage, attended by all the party; no sooner was the door of the enclosure thrown open, than a deafening shout from the expectant multitude rent the air, amidst which the words, "Success to our Queen, Bestamia!" were frequently repeated. A motion of Mootee's staff obtained silence, and the aged skull-bearer cried out with a shrill tremulous voice:

"Come hither, my children; come hither! and partake ye of the blessed Amrit, prepared by those of mighty power; accept this, (holding on high the yet smoking abomination) taste ye—and what can slay?—taste ye and what can wound?—accept of a boon wrested from Yama—a boon obtained by the all-subduing charms of your benevolent Queen, and fathers."

An universal scramble now took place, each anxious to obtain a portion of what could go but a small way amongst upwards of twenty thousand. The precious liquid was nevertheless served out, by spoonsfull, into the numberless vessels held out to receive it, and as it was given with this admonition, that a dipping in of the finger was as effectual as a draught, it no doubt was more widely distributed, than would otherwise be supposed.

This partition had not long been finished, and the consequent uproar died away, before another tumultuous clamour arose, which had however a much more serious origin. Cries of, "the enemy, the moslem dogs of the musnud robbing Aurungzebe!" struck Alraschid's ears, which was accompanied by much vituperation, and the shouting of those fakiers, who, vainly arrogating to themselves some authority over their disorderly comrades, besought, and at times threatened them to prepare for battle and certain conquest. A desultory obedience was at last paid to their exhortations, and the hut, beneath which lay our patient, instead of being the focus of this ruthless rabble, was in a few minutes quite deserted, and, excepting indeed some occasional yell, all was

peaceable. Alraschid was not so feeble as to be unable to quit his bed, at least he thought so; (for, of course, as yet he had never attempted the feat), and no longer being alarmed for any intrusion, by unwelcome visitors, he tore the oppressive bandages from his face, and made the attempt. Weak and cramped as he was, he found no difficulty in perambulating the enclosure; the simple act of locomotion invigorated him to an inconceivable extent, and the light of heaven, with surrounding objects, at which he had for some days peeped by stealth, struck his now unfettered eyes with a delicious and novel freshness, which he never before experienced, having never before been so long bed-ridden. 'Tis like being born again, with every faculty at once matured, to rise from the couch of sickness and survey cheerful nature. The eye glows with ecstasy on common-place things; the ear is strained to catch the rudest melodist of the grove; every plant is odoriferous—all is gladness—beauty—Providence.

Passing through the door of the enclosure, which had been hastily shut and left unfastened, the invalid found himself on a small rising ground, fronting a fertile, irregularly cultivated country, with a few deserted huts clumped together, of which the one he just had quitted was the most dignified. The outer wall of the square was a mud terrace, shaded by a very large tamarind tree; and as there was not a human being near, he ascended, without hesitation the terrace, which commanded a most extensive view of the surrounding country. It was, as far as eye could reach, an open savanna, interspersed here and there with woods, and within a mile of where he sat there was a small village. Partly betwixt him and this village, but chiefly to the right of it, the plains were covered with fakiers, in masses of different numbers; and about half a mile in front advanced, in regular array, the army of the Emperor. It was the eve of destruction, and Alraschid felt a sickening anxiety,

infinitely greater than if he himself had been mustered in either of the ranks.

What a horrid feverish pause is that just ere the strife begins! the rattling of the dice before the cast of life or death be decided—the last few minutes left for the operation of reason to all—the last for ever to thousands! The very atmosphere feels laden with death's superincumbence. The lungs inhale breath uncertainly, the heart too is dubious of her pulsations—and glimpses brighter than ever felt before of home—friends—parents—love—flash through the mind with a revolting fervour. 'Twas over—the booming of artillery—the rolling of musketry, and the clangour of warlike instruments, dispelled every thought, save that of mutual slaughter; and our invalid himself felt relieved, when he saw the conflict had actually begun. The rebels rushed forward like tigers, and fought with a desperate fury, adequate to the confidence inspired by their leader's sorceries—a confidence which had already gained for them several victories, against superior numbers. In the present contest, however, they were themselves opposed by superstition, for the keen-sighted Emperor had dispersed amongst his troops many magical billets*, which he affirmed were sufficiently powerful to counteract the charm of their enemy, and these were carried on spears, before each company of soldiers.

Excellent as was the order at first maintained by the government forces, it was quickly lost, and horses, elephants, camels, and men, were as shortly confounded together, amidst clouds of dust, which almost entirely hid the battle from Alraschid's view. For several hours the contest continued, and evidently, from the advancing and yielding of the host, with various success.

But at length the fakiers gave way; their savage im-

* A fact which proves how well that sagacious monarch knew how to turn into use, the weakness of human nature.

pettosity was completely foiled, by the determination of their more numerous and more disciplined opponents, and a general flight, accompanied by a merciless butchery, succeeded. The condensed masses being broken up, the plains, as far as the eye could reach, seemed teeming with human beings. All were dispersing, yet each one shaped for himself a course, and lucky now was he who had a beast, however despicable. Considerably advanced, before the other fugitives, drew near a small band of fakiers, bearing a litter. These advanced towards the huts with great rapidity, and our hero, who conceived there was much more danger from the vanquished than the victors, descended precipitately the terrace, and concealed himself in one of the deserted cottages.

He had not been here very long, before the party hurried past the door, howling in a low lugubrious tone, "Lost—lost—even our Queen not spared!"

It was Mootee they carried, faint and expiring; and it was then for the first time Alraschid was struck with the truth, that Mootee and Bestamia were the same person. At this reflection his blood ran chiller than ever it had done since his fever. She, whose sorceries and daring spirit had overthrown armies, and placed herself in competition with the great Aurungzebe,—she, whose steps had been as fountains of blood, and torches of desolation,—at whose name multitudes trembled—had hung compassionately over his bed of sickness—had nursed him—preserved him. The vampire had, for once, fanned without drawing blood.

His astonishment at this elucidation, was succeeded by gratitude for her kindness to himself, (a kindness which few, save fakiers, could boast of,) and had not a reflection on her many heinous crimes interfered, he could have pitied her fate and fortunes. This generous sensibility, however, combined with curiosity, were motives sufficient to make him quit his concealment, and follow the mournful group.

It had reached the forementioned walled enclosure, and Bestamia was stretched on the very pallet he had previously occupied. This was surrounded by seven misguided miserable looking beings, who, to the last, remained steadfast to their leader; and these, wringing wildly their hands, and beating their breasts, were giving loud vent to their sorrow, regardless of the dangerous proximity of the victorious enemy.

Alraschid entered resolutely this square, the door of which was unfastened, and to his astonishment was received with no hostile indications, although all beheld him. His valetudinarian look, and being unarmed, might, however, have sufficiently accounted for this, without its being attributed to the supreme dejection and despair of the party. Unmolested, scarcely regarded, he stepped up to the dying woman's bed-side, and could not refrain shuddering at the excruciating mental anguish which possessed her. Her spirit was flitting, uncertain, round the very needle point of existence, as lambent fires flicker on the lofty mast; and it seemed as if an offended Deity permitted it thus to be unnaturally detained, in order to permit the worm of conscience to batten on a prolonged life of guilt, with scalding bitterness. No dart, no ball had pierced her emaciated body; no blade had opened the mouths of death to her shrivelled veins;—disappointed hopes, and subverted ambition, had given her heart the wrench, which now was dragging her to the dust.

It was a miserable sight. Oh, what a fell swoop does death make on all puny mortal distinctions. When his mandate reaches—and throes convulse, what matter's it whether 'tis an emperor, who turns his gradually glazing eyes on the golden tissue, or a peasant, who looks to the sordid wall of his clay-constructed cottage? The unconnected expression which escaped from her white parched lips, declared the nature of Bestamia's reflections.

“Treacherous Selim! miserable husband! accursed

Omar!" were by starts ejaculated; and then when stabbed by that frequently recurring and destroying thought—the total ruin of all her lofty enterprises—she screeched as if from undergoing bodily torments. "Ah!" cried she, "of what use are charms and sacrifices?—who can rely on spiritual aid?—of what avail are obedience and adoration?—Detested tyrant," continued she, her mind even in its last workings, wandering as was its wont;—"restore me my sons! spare my faithful followers—my children!" and here the fakiers, on this allusion to themselves, set up a louder lamentation.

After a pause, her vacant eye was fixed on Alraschid, and a new train of ideas instantly presented themselves. "Ah!" said she, "and are you also come to upbraid me, for the depravity of a wretch?—could not this frame be permitted to pass into death, without further mortal coil?—avaunt! Know you not my presages of futurity were ever at variance with Omar's. Know you not, that when he said:

'Never, never to be bride,
Many woes shall her betide.'

I contradicted him, and—he stabbed me—stabbed me—stabbed me—his mother! and yet, was he no matricide! but"—her vagrant ideas again returning to her defeat,—“but—hell has combined against my devoted head—it however required hell. What else could have o'ercome so skilful a sorceress, and destroyed my children!—Oh!"—these were her last articulate words, for a general groan of her attendants drowned the last few she uttered, and immediately afterwards, a quick, yet short shivering of her limbs, a rigidity of features, and a slight gurgling in the throat, declared empire, wealth, magic, were now of little moment to Bestamia.

At this instant, a noise of horses' hoofs and men's voices was heard outside of the enclosure, and immediately afterwards the door was slammed open, and in

rushed a crowd of the government troops, headed by a well-armed, well-dressed personage, who was mounted on a punchy nag, somewhat too diminutive for the rider's size.

"Here they are!—down with the thieves!—kill the villains!" was roared from every mouth, saving the leader's, followed by a simultaneous rush upon the fugitives, who, raised to desperation, started up, with a furious determination of sacrificing their lives as dearly as possible.

"Hold!" exclaimed the person on horseback, "slaughter not!—fiends though they be, let us show ourselves men."

"Men!" replied he of the twisted neck,—“ye are dogs,—and thou, unless my eyes deceive me, art the greatest of villains!”

No further utterance was granted him, for the soldiery, with difficulty formerly checked, now disregarded all control, and springing on the fakiers, the surviving seven were quickly hewed to pieces; not, however, before several of their enemies had fallen. All were slain; and the distorted spokesman, who, though his face was turned to the destroyers, received a stab in the back; and, after tottering a second or two, fell lifeless on the lukewarm body of his queen. A husky shout of exultation now arose from all the survivors, saving the rider and Al-raschid.

"May arrack rise five and twenty per cent in price!" muttered the horseman, betwixt his teeth:—"if this be not cowardly carving!—When the strife—the manliness of equal strife excites, and the blood boils, cruelty can have no place—but this!—this is shamle work. Swinish panders!" continued he, fiercely,—“think not I am enraged for your contemptuous treatment of me. I am incensed at your dastardly exhibition!”—and snatching up a cudgel, which hung at his saddle bow, he knocked down a couple of the most conspicuous and officious performers. The voice, and above all, the rarity of the

curse, which this person had just uttered, astounded Al-raschid.

"What! can it be Buccas?" demanded he.

"And who else should it be?" replied the other.

"Truly, my face is no longer like a dyer's shop, or a cashmere shawl, but here's the identical corporeal. Ask my hack, Rustum, who, by the prophet's turban, has this day done his work nobly."—And really his jaded look, drooping head, and reeking hide, verified to some extent the commendation.

"You appear still doubtful," resumed Buccas, smiling,—"but did I not always tell you, your observation was only skin deep?—Ha, ha, perish the production of all vidual! if I have not proved what I asserted."

"Most assuredly you have," responded Al-raschid,—"but my astonishment arises at finding one, whom I considered advanced somewhat in years, younger I should say than myself."

"So much for that noble and blessed art, painting," responded Buccas,—"ugliness is, as well as beauty, at times a desideratum;—and how either are to be obtained when refused by nature, without the assistance of potent paint, I confess ignorance. But come, let us leave this detestable carnage; these ghastly corpses look more like monkeys than men, and, as you are weak, you must ride. Rustum is now at least quiet as a lamb. I will lead the way to the camp, where are many of your friends who imagine you, by this time, half worm-eaten."

So saying, he dismounted, and Rustum gave his well-lathered sides a shake, accompanied by a noise, half cough, and half groan, which emphatically bespoke the arduous nature of his day's duty.

CHAPTER XXII.

"With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
 He hangs between, in doubt to act or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a god or beast."

POPE.

THE tortoise pace at which Rustum proceeded, accorded well with Alraschid's present equestrian capabilities, and the road was materially shortened by Buccas's good humour and unremitting attention. Restored once more to his surviving friends, his first inquiries were after Ulluddeen, but to his great mortification he was told that there was no intelligence of him; and Alraschid began to be confirmed in his apprehensions of some calamity having befallen him. This disappointment was, however, in a great degree compensated by the unlooked for presence of kind-hearted father Ibrahim, who immediately took the invalid under his own especial care.

But we will now leave our unfortunate valetudinarian on his route to Agra, with the victorious army, and turn our attention to another quarter.

About half way betwixt that city and Ougien, the champagne nature of the country is intersected by a range of hills, through which there is for many miles but one passage, called the Mockundra pass. This is a very long narrow gorge, replete with beauty. Entering it, after leaving the brown monotonous plains, you seem at once transported into a different region; you are surrounded by woods, flowers, perfumes, rivulets;—whilst the hills, rising with abrupt grandeur on either side, are covered with trees of eternal verdure, the paradise of innumerable songsters. The sun appears here to assuage the

ferour of his beams, and fancy might well imagine this lovely spot the portal of Elysium, or some such happy valley, as that resorted to by the Abyssinian princes.

The road, which winds through this defile, is generally so narrow, as hardly to admit of two vehicles passing, and is cut with palpable labour through much rock and roughness. Here and there are interspersed many huge bald crags, contrasting, in a picturesque manner, with the exuberant verdure, and appearing gigantic thrones for the mythology of the land. About the centre of this pass, there is a considerable cluster of these large rocks, detached from the sides of the hills, not a few of which are partially reddened by the officious piety of devout pilgrims, (and thus simply hallowed into altars) and amongst their moistless interstices, a few stunted gnarled trees, writhe themselves into protracted unhealthiness. To evade these objects, the road makes an inconsiderable circuit.

It was behind the largest of these impediments, that, after the battle with Bestamia, a party sat smoking, most desperately, composed of Ulluddeen, Ramjohnny, and Buccas; whilst, hard by, within bite of some yellow unsucculent grass, were fastened their nags—Rustum, a little apart from the others, his ears, like a squatted hare, parallel with his neck, and looking unutterable things. The humours of the three friends were very different. Ramjohnny was, as usual, lively and good natured; but the hurkaru, with downcast eye and troubled brow, sat in gloomy silence. All Buccas' caustic comicality had been vainly exerted against him, and he remained unmoved by a fire of bantering and railery, sufficient to have provoked any one.

"Well, well!" cried Buccas, the smile on his no longer deformed features, passing into something like a frown, from chagrin at the perfect failure of his sallies; "all I have now to say, is, that you have lately grown more abstracted than a square root,—or more heavy than unleavened bread. May I henceforth live and prosper

as a Mater* if I have not said this day, (and purposely too) more good things than any professor of wit has ever done, and lo!—to what purpose?—There you sit as if you dreaded being dragged to execution. In the prophet's name, pluck up!—what can have possessed you!"

"If," replied Ulluddeen, "I am so dismal and unsocial as you describe me, it would be but making myself more disagreeable to inflict upon you the reason."

"Not so," said Ramjohnny, "we might be able to dispel your melancholy."

"Believe me," said Ulluddeen,—though I appreciate your sympathy, unobservance is its surest cure."

"We are answered, and made dumb;" replied Buccas,—"a handful of mud, or a dram could not have closed my mouth more effectively.—Heigho!—this world is indeed like the globe of some huge barometer, sometimes containing more, sometimes less of the mercury of happiness, but still ever fluctuating. May I be dried, and hung up like a pumpkin, if I believe not man to be the silliest of all created beings.—Silliest, because most versatile, and because so, the most miserable."

Ulluddeen could not help smiling at this text, as it might be called, to some paradox of the fakier's.

"You may wreath your chops with smiles," said Buccas, "till they resemble a duck pond, dimpled by a brick bat,—but imagine not yourself therefore argumentative. Look at the lion, he is not gifted with the tiger's craft, and is only merciless when roused by hunger, or rendered unhappy, when foiled in the nobleness of his onset. The stealthy tiger has the same stern determination, but combined with such cunning as makes him miserable when balked. The monkey again lives but to romp and perpetrate mischief, and is only sickened at heart, when defeated in such objects. But what, I would ask, is the occupation of man's thinking—feeling

* Scavenger.

part?—is he not a wretched compound of all these peculiarities?—is he not gifted with, and miserable in, each and all the failings peculiar to other creatures?—has he not the lion's resolution, accompanied by a pang more excruciating when disappointed?—the tiger's cunning and cruelty—and all the frivolity and revenge of his counterpart the ape?—Think you, my friends, that when a man erects a house, he feels no greater solicitude than the bird who hung his nest on yonder tree? or, when he digs a mine—beats not his heart more anxiously than that of the coney which burrows in the sand, or the fox which scrapes for itself a home?—Trust me, we have more folly, and consequently more misery, than any other created thing."

"Though I am forty-five come the rains," said Ramjohnny, "I can't say but the proportion of my days has been such as I should wish to pass again."

"You, like all fat men," said Buccas, with a grin, "may be an exception—you have in fact drifted down the stream of life without excitement, and without sorrow; but had you met one rude rock in your voyage, you might have found, that like a potsherd on the Ganges, a flaw, however trivial, would in time become a leak, capable of ere long sinking you; for instance, you never were crossed in love."

"Nor ever will be," said Ramjohnny.

Here Ulluddeen gave vent to a deep groan.

"Hollo!" exclaimed Buccas, regarding him narrowly. "Sits the breeze in this quarter? then split my nose, if I have not now got your blue devils by the tail!—in love!—I know it as well as fire knows gunpowder—but come," continued he, assuming a mild persuasiveness of manner, hardly resistable, "I must hear, my friend, what is preying on your mind; for unless you disclose the secret, I shall myself be very unhappy."

"Any importunity is unnecessary," said Ulluddeen, "for I will at once tell it you, on condition that you will not hereafter plague me. You have judged right; I do

love—hopelessly love; and it is only when I reflect that there is no hope, that I become almost distracted.”

“Hah, hah!” resumed Buccas, elevating his eye-brows with so sudden a twitch, as to make them appear to have entirely shifted their situation, “draw out all my teeth, and fill my gums with pepper! if I am not a crocodile, a very crocodile with a scaly tail, not to weep! what, in the name of all that is melting, can have become of my tears! do I not deliquate? Then am I, what I have long suspected, a stock—a stone in feeling. Rustum there, is the angel of pity, compared with such a wretch as I am,” and he thumped his breast, and feigned to pluck his beard in a manner so inimitably ludicrous, as to astonish even to dumbness the hurkaru, who under any other circumstances, must have burst with laughter; as it was, he concluded he must be deranged, or the most hard-hearted of monsters—but, before he could say a word, Buccas thus burst forth—“Well, I was indeed a buzzard, not to have seen this sooner—yes, yes, that convoy to Agra was a sickener! but, cheer up, for if there be truth in prophecy, you shall get the damsel.”

“’Tis impossible,” said Ulluddeen, “I never may aspire so high.”

“Stuff,” responded the other, disfranchizing at the same time from his cheeks a bushel of smoke, “shall man, who aspires as high even as heaven, be abashed by a woman? away with your whimsies, I know too much of her brother’s noble disposition, not to say most dictatorially that the wench is your’s, when you and she please; leave the thing to me, and I will manage it, and no very mighty thing either.”

Ulluddeen returned thanks for his proffered service, though he at the same time doubted that they would much avail, in obtaining for him Rhada with whom he had become captivated.

“You, at times,” said Ramjohnny, “do immense kindnesses, and it is a pity that one gifted with your

abilities, should so often employ them to little purpose."

"I understand you," answered Buccas, twisting his mustachios, "nor, without being in any degree vain, do I think you intend anything complimentary. My idea, however, of happiness, after which we are all in pursuit, is very different from yours; and though esteeming idleness a bane (which makes me be always some how or other employed), yet, on the other hand, to follow steadily any pursuit, diverging neither to the right hand nor to the left, is I think more insupportable. This, again, I regard as voluntary bondage. Therefore, friend Ramjohnny, am I just what I am, and whatever you please to designate me, indolent—unsettled—worthless—and what," continued he, replenishing his cheeks with smoke, and becoming suddenly very grave, "what, my friend, are man's loftiest pursuits, when analyzed, but wickedness and weakness? what, but a constant hankering after something, which as constantly eludes his grasp—a perpetual satiety of what is, for a vague desire of what is not? May my whiskers flee away with this mouthful of tobacco smoke, if I would not infinitely sooner be yon merry black-faced monkey, who skips and sports, with such wonderful agility, than most of my species! He enjoys, philosophically, his little span of life—yes, more so than the proportion of human nature—and why? because he has no care—and care is the all-pervading wormwood of existence." Here he stopped from fear of his pipe being extinguished.

"It appears to me," returned Ulluddeen, "you undervalue too much the gift of reason; can brutes be susceptible of such exalted delight as man's intellect is capacitated for receiving?"

"Who is there," answered Buccas, "can surely say—what is the extent of feeling in the brute creation? for that brutes have sensations, feelings, yes, and reason, the same as man, though in a different degree, I never can be persuaded to deny. My asseveration, however,

was that your monkey leads a happier life than most of our race, because he is unfettered by care or anxiety ; and lives according to the laws of nature. I grant him to be unsusceptible of any such exalted mental delights, as his more gifted analogy, but is man's existence, therefore, to be pronounced, on the whole, more pleasurable ? is the opium debauchee, on account of his beatific reveries, to be declared on the whole more happy, than one who leads a temperate, well regulated life ?—no—the hell of horrors—the perdition of the heart, which succeeds his excesses, detract a hundred-fold from his previous indulgements.”

“ Although I am altogether unqualified,” said the hurkaru, “ to argue on such topics, there are two things, which you have just stated, that I cannot admit. First, that brutes are gifted with reason ; and, secondly, that that principle of our nature, which ever makes us look forward, is a cause of unhappiness ; I should affirm the direct contrary ; for is it not a proof of our being destined for something more excellent hereafter ? and what enjoyment can compare with the discontentment of a good man with this unsubstantial life, when we remember that that very discontentment is accompanied by a certain eagerness of eternal bliss ?”

“ If,” replied Buccas, “ you enter into any disputation with me, on such abstract matters—you must, in the first place know, if I have not before acquainted you, that I am devoid of prejudices of every kind ; that I speak whatever the intellect my Maker has given me prompts, and nothing more, and that I believe neither in the religions, nor in a great part of the philosophy of the world ; and, albeit, trigged out ascetic like as you have oft seen, I assumed that garb in order that, by flattering the follies of others, I might follow my own. Having premised thus much, by way of confessional, I will only further add, that with respect to animals being gifted with reason, any arguments would be unnecessary, inasmuch as you admit they have instinct. I know you will advance

that there is a difference betwixt instinct and reason, though assuredly I cannot perceive it, no more than there is betwixt the life of an animal and man; or in the laws by which that life is maintained; or in its cessation; or in the will by which its actions are regulated. Wherever a will exists, reflection is implied, and reflection cannot exist without reason, albeit that reason may be modified to infinity; there is, assuredly, as vast a difference betwixt a philosopher and a clown, as betwixt a clown and an elephant; and as no labour, no instruction, can make a philosopher out of a clown, so none could elevate an elephant into an equality with the latter; yet have both reason in different grades. But you may affirm that brutes are directed by certain laws, which they invariably follow; granted—and so is man; though, from the superiority of his intellect, they are perchance more limited, and not so universally perceptible; yet, my friend, does this in any way affect my argument?—no—in short, a few words may disclose the whole secret of your trite assertion; and these are, pride and arrogance; we disdain to be classed with what we lord over and despise. But alas,” said Buccas, enfranchising another cloud, “what are we but dust? and if, without intending any irreverence, we could conceive the fabricator of all, capable of mirth, what could more amuse him than the puffed up absurdities of we little atoms?”

“Now, by our prophet,” interrupted Ramjohnny, who being a firm follower of him he swore by, had listened to his companion’s address with marked displeasure throughout, “I am, indeed, more sorry than Ulluddeen to see you are in so desperate a state, declaring yourself most distinctly a kaffir (infidel), and decrying our nature to the lowest of all worthless standards.”

“Well,” resumed the fakier, interrupting him unceremoniously, “be that as it may; you had not heard all I had to say. Our friend, the hurkaru has attempted to deduce an argument in favour of a nobler and better state hereafter, by reason of our constant avaricious craving

after futurity. Now, I would ask, if when we find that such persons as long most vehemently after prospective good, such as the accumulation of riches, honours, power, &c. are disappointed; would not the converse of his conclusion be every whit as just, namely, that this is but a crowning absurd phantasy!"

"Wah! wah! shame! shame!" exclaimed the others, and a torrent of abuse flowed from Ramjohnny, against such heretical sentiments, in which abuse the hurkaru heartily joined. This clamorous closing of the dialogue was, however, itself suddenly hushed by the shrill tinkling of bells, and the brief nervous neigh of a quadruped. Within three hundred yards of them, a small procession was leisurely sweeping round the forementioned circuit; it consisted of a train of three carriages, the first of which was covered with red cloth and drawn by two large handsome milk white bullocks; round the necks of these were brass chains, ornamented with cow-ries and small bells; their horns were dyed, within a few inches of their heads, of a bright red, and tipped with carved brass; nor was a less liberal dispensation of paint afforded to their tails, which resembled two huge broken stemmed peonies dangling in the breeze. Through each of their nostrils was run a wooden peg, with a cord by way of rein.

The build of this machine was simple enough, and sufficiently rude: a pair of clumsy wooden wheels, wholly unconscious of the presence of iron, supports a small square platform of bamboos, from each corner of which, rises a wooden post or bamboo to the height of four feet; these uprights are connected together at top, and being covered with some coarse cloth, usually of a red or blue colour, the whole forms a sort of cupola which proves a sufficient fence against the sun. They are moreover furnished with curtains, so that the individual within, can, at pleasure, be completely concealed from view.

This kind of vehicle is supported, by means of a pole and yoke, on the necks of the oxen, and directed usually, as in the present instance, by a young lad, who, seated on the pole, continues chattering and using, alternately, terms most endearing or reprehensive, according as he is pleased with the exertions of his cattle. The other two carriages were much more capacious : devoid of all covering, and laden with luggage, some small tents, provender, and cooking implements, &c. these were escorted by six well armed personages, all of whom were on foot, saving one who was indisputably the most ferocious looking—he bestrode an animal which bore less resemblance to its species, than to any other upon earth. It was a pony of a light snuff colour with a profusion of saffron spots, interspersed with white, altogether marvellous, and not unlike a piece of curious jasper ; his muzzle seemed bound in the skin of some Hyperborean native, such as the ermine, and his eye was like that of any species of fish save that of the mermaid. All these items may however be met with in nature, but not his figure ; this was unique in history. He might have been defined a living locomotive circumbendibus. His hocks intersected one another inwardly for half a foot, and his front feet seemed joined together like one's fore fingers—far behind, like a comet's, hung his tail, and his ears stuck out as far before ; but this latter embellishment was assumed on beholding Rustum, whom at first sight he unhesitatingly greeted ; besides all these peculiarities, this beast was so diminutive, that it would have been utterly impossible for the proprietor to have ridden him, had he not devised a very cunning expedient ; and that was, to oppress him with a huge heavy pad, which made him a couple of hands higher, and saved his master's feet from more than slightly touching at intervals the dust.

The alarm occasioned by the approach of this party, was but of short duration. The fakier threw aside his

pipe, having first lighted therefrom his match, and the others followed his example ; scarcely had the just mentioned poney begun a second noise, before it was responded to by three coolly delivered shots from the concealed party ; immediately the circumbendibus, with its pad and rider, rolled simultaneously in a cloud of dust—a motley mass, and above which quivered four misshapen shanks, not unlike those of a wood-louse, when thrown upon its back. One of the nearest armed attendants was also mortally pierced ; he stretched on high his hands with a deep quickly drawn gasp, sprung forward into the air, and then tumbled as lifeless as any of the stones he covered.

Universal uproar now ensued, the cliffs, rocks and glens, re-echoed the noise and cries, whilst the astonished bullocks, contemning all control, galloped furiously off. Conspicuous above all others were the peonies ; they lowered their slaving nostrils to the earth—blew ; expanded their large black eyes, erected their tails, and making a rush almost of madness, accompanied by a sudden turn and jerk, the concomitant machine was dashed against the bank and overturned.

“ May my two legs fail me on the bridge of Paradise ! ” exclaimed Buccas, smiling, whilst his corrugated left eye-lid still remained unopened after his aim, “ may my two legs fail me ! if either that pimpish looking knave, or his beast, or I hope both, have not got more ghee than they bargained for ! ha ! ha !—but let us go hand to hand with the skinny faces ! ”

This was instantly agreed to, and Ulluddeen, having got the start, came up with the proprietor of the murdered tatoo,* who, being unhurt, had, nevertheless, considerable difficulty in extricating himself from the overwhelming pressure of the pad ; he, however, effected this before the hurkaru got alongside, and drawing his sabre a furious rencontre instantly commenced.

* Poney.

Both were brave, active, skilful, and bent on each other's destruction; and the combat was carried on with all the determined fury likely to spring from such circumstances. Whilst this was going on, the others, six in number (for one of the drivers had engaged in the affray,) had collected themselves together, and though the odds seemed desperate, yet as Ramjohnny had rightly stated, all, saving the leader, were most notorious cowards.

In fact it was merely this great superiority in numbers, and the valiant example of their captain which prevented them all absconding; as it was, all their assistance consisted in vociferous gasconading, and flourishing wildly their weapons.

This slight auxiliary aid, however, was not long permitted them; for the fakier and Ramjohnny threw themselves without hesitation into the midst of this clamorous and pusillanimous band. Ramjohnny on the instant cut down the unfortunate bullock driver, who had so sillily volunteered; and Buccas, at the same time, with his great crooked club, disposed of a brace right and left, with as much facility as if they had been penguins; exclaiming with a most prodigious noise, and innumerable scientific flourishings of his weapon:—

“Come on, ye infidel bacon eaters! this is the black hour of your destinies! the jackals claim your scurvy skulls for a repast! your claims for destruction shall be attended to! dogs! hah, hah!”

Such were the fakier's exclamations: but all intimidatory speeches were unnecessary, inasmuch as the remaining three took themselves off as quickly as their legs could carry them. Buccas, now that the field was clear, turned towards Ulluddeen, who after a long and severe struggle, had gotten his antagonist down, and was on the point of stabbing him with a poignard; both having relinquished their swords in a wrestle for life or death. On seeing this, he sprung forward, and by a

blow of his bludgeon just managed to knock the steel out of his friend's hands, and thereby saved the wretch.

"Nay, brother!" said he, "spare the vanquished, and what is more, the only gallant heart amongst the varlets; the other cowardly curs are all dispersed, and the day is fairly ours."

This brought the hurkaru to reflection, and after congratulating each other on the perfect success of their enterprize, they held a brief council as to what ought to be done. However, in the first place, they examined the machine which had been upset, and near which was seated a lovely girl with a servant, weeping bitterly. These were Noorun and Johorun, who, though uninjured, were dreadfully frightened.

Time could not be spared for fully explaining to the young lady their reasons for the affray; though Ulluddeen quieted not a little her fears, by the kindness he showed her, and the brief sketch of their plans which he found means to deliver, whilst they replaced the carriage on its wheels. They now unanimously resolved to continue their route to Agra with all despatch, lest some of the runaways should give intelligence to the troops at the head of the pass, of what had occurred, and they might be pursued.

Buccas, however, affirmed there was no chance of that, as the fugitives would not regain breath, sufficient to speak, for at least three days. Their next care was the disposal of the dead, which they threw into an adjoining jungle, as also the poney that had come there on an unlucky day. The same reasons for hastening forward, rendered it necessary to take precautions against the escape of their captive, and he was fastened to one of the carts by a strong cord.

The drivers of the bullocks, who had all fled precipitately for a short distance out of the reach of danger, were induced, by promises and kindness, to resume

their occupations ; indeed the whole worldly gear of these individuals was invested in their conveyances, and it is not to be wondered at that they were solicitous as to their fate. The whole procession now continued its march as formerly, only under a different escort.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“The day is lowering—stilly black
 Sleeps the grim wave, while heaven’s rack,
 Dispers’d and wild, ’twixt earth and sky,
 Hangs like a shatter’d canopy!”

MOORE.

ALL apprehensions of danger, from the Emperor’s soldiers, were banished by sunset, when the victorious party found themselves at least twenty miles from the pass of Mockundra. They had by this time nearly crossed an extensive plain, (at least so the experienced Buccas declared) for its limits were hardly to be distinguished on account of the thin mists which imperceptibly encircled them. Although the ladies were much fatigued, and the bullocks so jaded as to require incessant goading and cursing, it was absolutely necessary to proceed at least a couple of miles further to the next well, water being as indispensable in eastern travelling, as fire or fur in any hyperborean region.

One half of this long fagging two miles had scarcely been drawled through, ere the sun’s jolly chin began to disappear below the heavy horizon, with all the striking rapidity of the tropics. But Buccas alone perceived that that chin was dappled, in a most suspicious manner, by a distant ridge of clouds which stuck up like the black grisly heads of sooty Africans.

“Hum!” exclaimed Buccas, reining in Rustum, and watching for some minutes these celestial phenomena, “may I forget my vernacular, Ulluddeen, if I do by any means admire that inauspicious garnishing round the blessed luminary. Specify me an ass! Ramjohnny, an ungainly ass with a stripe down my back, if I have not

seen such a beard as that prove a nest of devils, numerous as its hairs ; raging devils, Ulluddeen."

"And so have I, brother Buccas," responded Ramjohnny, with that approving nod which gigantic travellers know how to assume, when a display of knowingness in another person elicits their corroboration or assent, "I remember that boding beard full well ; nor am I likely to let my eye-sight fall listlessly on the harbinger of the monsoon, after the perilous voyage I once made, in a leaky bunder boat, from Baroach to Goa."

"You sail in a bunder boat !" responded Buccas, "why, when did the foul fiend inspire you with such an unnatural appetite ? I would as soon look for a porpoise in a porcupine's hole as your sleek carcass careering ocean in a bunder boat."

"Doubtlessly," replied Ramjohnny, laughing ; "I partake more of the land than the sea crab in my nature, yet so it was, that once in my life I was guilty of a nautical trip, which almost wound up my worldly account current. First of all, we crossed the gulf of Cambay to Gogo, whence we sailed on as fine a morning as ever glistened on the sea. At night, however, just such a cloudy jungle as that muddied the sky ; nor unnoticed,—for the weather-beaten manjee* at once declared it portended wind, and prepared to put in for the nearest port, which was Dumaun.

"All exertion was, however, unavailing ; for the coast, as you know, is so begirt with reefs and banks, that we were obliged, like every one else, to keep well out to sea, and in half an hour's time, the hurricane overtook us, raging like a legion of veritable devils. In a few minutes the water, which had been smooth as any tank, turned into gulfs and hills. We were soon driven, with an awful crash, against the latent coral, and in another moment all was wreck and fragments.

"Around me were the bodies of my comrades—some

* The captain.

of whom were shrieking and struggling for life ; whilst others were drowning senselessly, being stunned by the resistless shock. Some were actually torn to pieces on the lacerating ridges of these rocks, o'er which the billows burst with the noise of thunder. To cut short my story," continued Ramjohnny, perceiving symptoms of impatience in his auditors, " I and three wretched dandies (boatmen) only escaped, the fury of the tempest acting as our friend, by drifting the bamboos and spars which kept us floating a distance we otherwise could never have accomplished. Since that escape, therefore," said he, fervently, and nodding his head once more in the same sly sapient manner, " well does yonder angry cloud, Buccas, admonish me of danger."

" Aye, aye," responded the fakier, turning for the first time his face from the now vanished orb,— " to one observant of things which pass around, a moat may be as useful as a mountain. Were man but to mark the trifling prognostics which beneficent Providence wills should usually attend the every change of that harmonious universe, o'er which it eternally presides, how little reason would we have to rail at the fickleness, the mutability of fortune, or repine at lot and situation ! What, oh Ulluddeen, is prudence—wisdom—but wariness obtained by observance ?"

" Or in other words," said the hurkaru, in a melancholy manner,— " what are they but the apathy consequent on experience, purchased dearly at the expense of ourselves or others, who have anticipated us in bitterness and sorrow."

" Nay," rejoined Buccas, " I deny prudence or wisdom to be, as you style it, but the apathy of experience—though I see what you would fain express. You, however, are in love, and therefore more chop-fallen than a robbed miser. Strange it is that love should so oft open the optics of young folks, only to the gloomy hangings of life, whilst so many draperies of gorgeous hue, and golden texture, glisten without being appreciated."

"Be it so, be it so," returned Ulluddeen ;—"this is, however, no evening for chopping logic, my good friend ; for, during your brief descant upon wisdom, experience, and love, observe how threatening has become the aspect of yon conglomerated clouds ;—assuredly, it portends a storm."

"Then the best thing for man and beast," said Buccas, "is to make for the nearest shelter,—and ignorant am I of garlic if I know not a hickmut (knack) for quickening these sluggish vermin !"

So saying, he wheeled round Rustum by a bang on the side of the head, as suddenly as if he had been centred on a pivot, and with threats and oaths of the most diabolical tendency, urged on the trembling bullock drivers. The poor jaded brutes had for a long time scorned the cheering speeches, the shocking imprecations, and even partially the merciless goadings of their taskmasters. They had therefore now to undergo the last excruciating penalty and resource, which consisted in having their respective tails nearly dislocated by harsh and dexterous twisting. This produced the desired momentum, so that they managed to get the creaking vehicles lugged across the plain, and had fairly entered a narrow sandy ravine, before the first note of the advent dirge of the hurricane saluted mournfully their ears.

Although they were still some distance from the intended halting ground, the party were but of one opinion, that it was better to prepare themselves for the nearing storm, in a situation which afforded some little protecting advantage, than risk being overtaken by it, whilst on the road. All hands were, therefore, soon actively engaged in pitching the tents ; Buccas setting the example, by leaping on the wooden cart wheels, and dragging instantly a portion of it down—and lucky was it for them no time was lost ; for by the time one half of the ladies' tent was secured to the strong maiks, or pegs, which upheld it, the gusts of wind followed each other in such quick and furious succession, as nearly undid what work

was accomplished, rendering further progress exceedingly arduous.

Before the storm, however, had fairly established itself, all the kurnauts, or walls, of the tent were affixed to the upper portion, with every precaution against the well foreseen trial of its stability; and the ladies, with all their baggage, being ensconced, the doors were closely secured by thick purdus, or curtains, the bottoms of which were fastened by pegs, driven into the ground. Buccas and his friends now attempted to erect another small tent, destined for their own comfort,—but this turned out an impossibility.

“Wa, wa!” exclaimed Ramjohnny, who was desperately out of wind, from holding on at one of the extended ropes,—“’tis of no use, Buccas, contending against all this;—a maik will stand no better than a paddystraw,—there!”—and as he spoke, away flew the inflated canvass into the air, flapping about with such noise and fury, as intimidated the whole party from venturing for some time to approach it.

“Well,” said Buccas, with some asperity, at finding all their exertions baffled,—“I care not a paddystraw for my carcass—the poor females are comfortable, and that reflection will, to a certain extent, make me so. Since we can’t pitch this plaguy skittish tent, let us at least strive to fasten it over the hackery,* by which means our things will be kept dry, till the storm has tired itself with spitting and coughing. We are not such sugar sticks as to have our calves diminished by a few bucketsful of water.”

“No,” replied Ramjohnny, with a grin,—“nor need you, from your improved edition of face, be apprehensive of having that splendid portrait damaged, which, till lately, was your eternal travelling companion.”

This and much more similar badinage, was received and retorted with the best humour,—whilst Buccas’ sug-

* Cart.

gestion of keeping dry the luggage was promptly put in execution.

“Bear a hand! ye sluggardly infidels!” ejaculated the fakier, in a voice of thunder, and flourishing his cudgel over the heads of the frightened drivers, whose tardiness, combined with a savage blast of wind, went near to dispel all his benignity. “Bear a hand, and unyoke those more sensible brethren of yours, before I count nine of my fingers, unless you desire a top dressing for your greasy knobs!”

This, and one or two other such innuendoes instantly produced such a strenuous and efficacious division of labour, as subdued the riotous canvass,—placed it over the vehicle, in which was deposited everything likely to suffer from the rain, and in a short time the whole was as snugly covered and secured by ropes, as if it had been a jar of first growth dates from Persia.

Whilst this was being accomplished, a torrent of dust (that yellow haired hereditary herald of the desert’s discord) flew over them with the fleetness of coursers, whirling at times, with dizzying rapidity, in the form of stupendous pillars, that nevertheless seemed to uphold the ponderous superincumbent masses,—whilst, at intervals, amongst them flashed distant lightnings, burning the black heavens, and giving glimpses of an intermediate host of raven clouds, the mansions of their dread sublimity!

The narrow gorge, in which our party had ensconced themselves, was fringed by a few small trees, the rustling foliage of which was stript off, and carried high in air, where it immediately joined the sportive medley of straw, dust, and grass, which whisked above their heads. But the whirligig reign of these buoyant materials was destined to be of brief duration, for in a few minutes, with the suddenness of a shower-bath, down came the surcharged clouds. The thunder, which had been gradually becoming louder and more frequent, now crashed directly over them, and the liquid lightning dashed

athwart their eyes with a vivid intensity, which made the stole of night seem doubly dark ;—it was indeed terrible. The union of all elements appeared for ever loosened,—Chaos seemed claiming his own, and scouring the earth's fair surface, as if suddenly empowered to disorganize everything orderly, beautiful, or stable.

At the moment that the tempest was at its height, and the wind howled like a legion of famished wolves, scrambling for prey, a blaze of the ethereal lava, that appeared to lay open the highest heavens, hissed round them, followed by such a deafening peal, as if the solid globe had been rent asunder. Even the stout heart of Buccas quaked at the awful rattling and booming of this thunder ;—after which the incessant pattering accompaniment of heavy rain, falls on the tense ear with so peculiar and solemn a sensation. But the stupor of amazement, succeeding this, was instantly dispelled by dismal groans, and another white flash explained the reason. One of the above noticed trees was shivered to splinters, and at the same time nearly cut in two, whilst a bullock, with its driver, lay lifeless at its foot.

"May Providence !" exclaimed the fakier, "assist me especially but this night, and I will do for myself to-morrow ! If the women have escaped this dreadful bout," continued he,— "further danger there is none ; for, may I fall down and supplicate Oali, the four-handed Siva's spouse, for a kiss, if we, Ulluddeen, have not touched the marrow, and seen the very heart pulse of the hurricane. 'Tis unlikely, I say, anything to be dreaded can remain. Who cares for a covra's tail, when his hood is in his hole ?"

"Crow not too cheerily, good Buccas," replied Ramjohnny, "for I have seen the tail of such a hurricane prove, like that of a scorpion, its greatest bane. When wrecked in the Bunder boat, as I just now described, it was the tail of the typhaun that nearly did for us."

This information was lost on both Buccas and Ulluddeen, for, before Ramjohnny had finished his observa-

tion, the young men had anxiously repaired to the ladies' tent, to inquire after their safety. Though much alarmed, they, to their great satisfaction, found, that miraculously, they had escaped all danger; and justly may it be called miraculously, since the tree, which was in some places split like an old pen, stood within a dozen yards of their fragile covering.

As Buccas prognosticated, the storm now subsided; the thunder softened by distance; the blast became more fitful, and eventually moderated, whilst the drenching rain, at intervals, suddenly desisted. Of this the party failed not to take the earliest advantage, and after some trouble they succeeded in pitching the soaked paul;* as soon as this was done, their situation was comparatively luxurious. A bright charcoal fire was quickly prepared; their wet clothes were changed, thick glossy mats made them independent of the damp ground, and from the mouth of each individual issued, as if by magic, a cloud of dense smoke, which quickly banished all former hardships, and inspired content and cheerfulness.

Buccas, moreover, blushed not to draw forth from amongst his chattels his big-bellied gourd bottle, which was choke full of most superior arrack, and which, having elevated to the disregarded clouds, for the duration of six or seven great gulps, he afterwards passed it with a cunning laudatory smack of the lips, to his equally unbogoted companions.

"Drink," muttered the fakier, after regaining the wind he had expended in his zealous suction, "drink, brother Ulluddeen, and moisten the burning throb of thankfulness, which, if your heart feels as mine does, must now warm your interior. That only one poor wretch has been snatched from amongst us to eternity, demands gratitude to God in the first place, and then

* Small tent.

innocent enjoyment; so drink, I say, and pass the care-dispelling flask."

"Musselman though I be," said Ramjohnny, whose eye followed covetously the gyration of the bottle, "I will myself venture an infringement of scriptural discipline this night," and he indulged in a smirk, which fully told it was not for the first time he had ventured on the same liberty.

"Right, my orthodox friend," replied Buccas, "the sooner creeds are discarded the better, when they interfere with free agency; slice my head like a cucumber, if I would balk my belly of a dram after such a welkin has set over us! for although this be not the twentieth nor hundredth occasion on which I have found my scone endangered for a fellow-creature, without claim or lien upon my services, never till now stood I in such jeopardy."

"Nor is it," answered Ulluddeen, after he had obeyed to the very letter Buccas' convivial solicitation, "the first time that I have been your companion in the risk and hardship attending your generous enterprises; gladly and deeply do I pledge you, for I know of no joy, equal to the satisfaction I at present feel, that Noorun, my best friend's own beloved, is safe, and rescued by your wit and courage from infamy and despair. How little justice, oh Buccas! would one slightly acquainted with you, do your heart! for few have laboured with more disinterestedness in befriending the desolate and oppressed, with such small pretensions to the paraphernalia of religion, and mockery of insincere morality."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied the fakier, eclipsing at the same time his face and turban by a new great delivery of smoke; "one half the little good I have been the means of doing, friend Ulluddeen, can easily be resolved into thoughtlessness or whim, and I believe, if mankind would but confess the truth, there lives not a man who could sit down, after spending a score years

in this pantomime world, and count up as many really virtuous actions. How many which he fooled himself into a belief of being so, would on reflection turn out skilfully-masked selfishness,—honied drugs. He would discover a suspiciously false ring in every charitably circulated coin,—a flaw in every feeling. How piebald would be the motives even of his adoration to that deity, whose all-pervading eye has seen the heart's finest mechanism at work! those hair-springs, levers and balances, which humanity could not scrutinize! Oh Ulluddeen! we seem angels, but alas, man, with rare exceptions, is a villain; he is as much a microcosm in feeling as in body—all, all, is self-idolatry." And he wound up this rhapsody with another fumigation, which resembled a water-spout at sea.

"I mean nothing," replied the hurkaru, "but what I say; indeed, to attempt to blind your eyes with flattery, you who are so well read in human nature, would speak little for my own sagacity. Although the most eccentric mortal I ever met, I will so far compliment you by saying that myself and Alraschid have found you a sincere friend; so, Ramjohnny, do justice, I prithee, to my pledge," and he passed the gourd towards his outstretched hand.

"The queer hatted but wise Christians," said the fakier, "have a text or proverb, I have somewhere heard, that he who blows a horn whilst he gives alms, gives really none in the eyes of God, but publishes the corruption of a cankered heart; so the less outcry I make of my works and motives, the better chances of Paradise may I have hereafter, if their creed prove the soundest metal,—and you know I profess myself everything and nothing; ha! ha!—However, without meaning any nauseating self-praise, I may say this much on the matter now in hand, that a more ill-used, amiable, aye, and beautiful girl, than the one we have this day snapped, as it were, out of hell-fire, never before crossed

my path of charity. 'Tis a pleasure to me, Ramjohnny, to act a kind part to any injured woman."

"No doubt, no doubt;" interrupted Ramjohnny with a leer, as he licked his lips, clear of the precious drops which lingered like dew around them.

"Come," resumed Buccas, looking very glum, "puff not those thirsty cheeks of yours with licentious injustice; for mark me, I hold not your sow doctrine, that woman is a whit man's moral inferior, though I do that he is her's in affection; and love I regard as the nearest link betwixt humanity and heaven. Profligate though I be," continued he, grasping his cudgel with an earnestness, which by no means recommended contradiction, "may my next rice dinner prove musky! if I ever volunteered protection to unfriended innocence from base design, and if there be any such thing hereafter as punishment for cool calculating crime—the betrayer of confiding woman, that cruel blight of the heart's rosiest blossoms, which like the aloe generations see but once in flower, he verily will have his portion. But," continued Buccas, divesting himself suddenly of the animation which had warmed him, "enough of this unconvivial balderdash; whenever such topics are started I find myself running at full speed before I thought myself upon my legs; and with respect to Selim's daughter, I feel an interest in her security and happiness too powerful to describe."

"And how, may I ask, did you first know anything about her?" demanded Ulluddeen; "for in order to baffle the villany by which the lady was encompassed, you must assuredly have been for some time acquainted with her, directly or otherwise."

"My first interview with her lover, at least," answered the fakier with a broad grin, "you had the pleasure of witnessing. How savagely did you curse on that hot day, friend Ulluddeen, the fastening of your well turned ancles!"

At this reminiscence, Ramjohnny, in spite of his na-

tural politeness, conceived himself justified in a protracted chuckle, which did not prove at all delightful to their companion's feelings.

"And a free booting exploit it was," replied the hurkaru, "in which you would not have so easily succeeded, had we suspected your intention. However, all is long ago forgiven, if not forgotten. But how long were you acquainted with Noorun, previous to that *rencontre*?"

"I had never seen nor heard of her," replied Buccas, "but hush!—what noise is that?"

The party were silent, when a protracted yell, ending in a sharp yelp, saluted their ears during the lulling intervals of the wind.

"A jackal baying!" said Ramjohnny. "Is it possible they can have suspected, that the lightning would provide for them the glorious feast, that poor bullock will prove for them to-morrow?"

"I have heard the jackal wail, as often as most men," remarked Buccas, "and can myself cozen the species with my imitation, but I never heard that exact howl before."

"That may be," said Ramjohnny, "but, albeit no connoisseur in so horrible a gamut, I can vouch for its being the veritable discord of the brutes and no others. Hark! again."

And the loud undoubted bark of a pack in busy foray grated in their ears.

"Aye, aye, they nose death and garbage as surely as doctors do rich invalids," said Buccas; "pass round the bottle, Ramjohnny, and let us heap the fire, meanwhile, I will look after my nag's supper. I suppose you will like me to make one job serve the purpose of us all, and save you the same trouble;" so saying, and without waiting for any compliments, he seized his stick and withdrew.

No sooner had he done this, than a prodigious dis-

turbance arose outside, with shouts of robbers—murder—and the clashing of arms. The two young men instantly started up to join their friends, when the cords of the tent gave way as if by magic, and made them both most effectually prisoners.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Know thus far forth,
 By accident most strange, bountiful fortune,
 Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
 Brought to this shore; and, by my prescience,
 I find my zenith doth depend upon
 A most auspicious star; whose influence
 If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
 Will ever after droop.”

THE entrance of Aurungzebe's victorious army into Agra, two days after their decisive victory over the fakiers, afforded at once a confused scene of smiles and tears; the unbridled joy and exultation of the soldiery, their hearty shouts, jokes, and songs, broadly contrasted with the wo-begone, and dejected appearance of their wretched prisoners; hundreds of whom were driven triumphantly forward in strings, to suffer, what they justly anticipated was their doom—slavery, or death, attended with every cruelty and ignominy.

Far from participating in the general exhilaration of his friends was Alraschid; every step, which brought him nearer the dark fortress, that stood sternly before him, crowded his mind with bitter remembrances. How many and great were the changes in his fortunes, since he last had beheld that interesting pile! and, though richer and greater, his heart could not help asking the question, if he were not more unhappy, than when, as page, his boyish duties had engrossed all his thoughts and hours.

What changes too had others undergone! That be-

loved master, whose patronage had first advanced him to that path of honour, the vistas of which were as boundless as the heart's desires—had himself experienced every cruel vicissitude of fortune. Having rushed into a rash and desperate rebellion against his father, it ended, after plunging him into a sickening series of sufferings, in his perpetual imprisonment in the fortress of Guallior.

From the little connexion Prince Mahommed has with our story, further than befriending Alraschid on his entrance into life, we may perhaps be blamed by our readers, for unnecessarily intruding him on their notice ; but having done so, we may be excused mentioning this, his hapless fate. We need not expatiate on the state of his feelings, when the reflection occurred, that the splendid city before him, contained the sad relict of a once happy and independent family, one which now altogether depended on the charity of a lowly, but generous stranger.

The prospect, however, of being soon able fully to render them happy and easy in their circumstances, as also to reward the kind individual, who had burdened himself with their protection, afforded him a tranquil delight, which was only overcast by that miserable uncertainty concerning Noorun, which pertinaciously overshadowed all his brightest moments.

Buccas, it is true, had engaged to deliver her, and, although he could place but little dependance on the promise of one, so versatile and uncertain in character, yet did hope cling to this very promise, the more adhesively from its desperation. The strange disappearance of his friend Ulluddeen, added moreover to his depression ; so that, from the combined ailments of body and mind, he was about as unhappy as humanity can well be.

Much against the advice of Ibrahim, Alraschid, though too enfeebled to venture safely on much exertion, immediately set about searching for honest Ben Hassen, the

barber ; nor was he long finding him, for his shop happened to be in one of the most crowded bazaars, and the very first he entered to make inquiries ; there he found his beloved mother and sister, so scrupulously cared for, that it was some time ere the barber's doubts, as to our hero's identity, were dissipated, before he granted the interview, for which he was all impatience.

We shall not attempt to portray that meeting, nor repeat a word of the thousand questions and explanations which followed each other in rapid succession ; but, leaving so difficult a task to the imagination, proceed to incidents of more vital interest.

It was perhaps the excitement produced by so joyful a meeting, together with the want of care Alraschid had taken of himself, during weather exceedingly sultry, which brought on a slight relapse of fever, and confined him to bed ; but by the unremitting attention of that best of all nurses, a fond mother, his health was soon more than restored ; and to invigorate his frame, he, by the advice of his physician, indulged in various little excursions. As he one evening was setting out for his accustomed exercise, he was struck with the appearance of two persons standing in one of the bazaars, and apparently engaged in earnest conversation. The shop which fronted them was a butcher's, its stall being splendidly garnished with innumerable tiny skewers of bamboo, on which were strung like beads, chopped pieces of kid or mutton ; wide plantain leaves, meanwhile, contained ribs, shoulders, and larger pieces, all of which were being rendered into the just mentioned state of comminution, by two greasy savage looking assistants. As Alraschid was about passing them, the bulkier individual's voice sounded sufficiently familiar to him, though he could not see his face, from the anxiety with which he kept it fixed on the stall, holding at the same time his brawny hands, partly on his waist, as if for support, and partly on his plump pauch, from an open-faced covetousness of the savoury viands.

"Capital kuwaubs,* capital kuwaubs!" exclaimed this lusty amateur, "and were it not for my new dress, and military reputation, by our prophet, I would take a 'seir' or two home with me."

"We will take care to send for some," replied the other, "finer goshet certainly I never saw,—gram fed, I'se warrant, and reasonable too at the price."

"Aye, dog cheap! carrion cheap!" muttered the other,—"I've seen the starved sheep, just driven from the burnt up plains of Aggur, sell nearly as dear. We have no such meat with us, Dowlut!" and wheeling round, whilst he gave a mournfully expressive shake of his head, corroborative of this unpleasant opinion, Alraschid recognized, as he had anticipated, the bluff stupid face of Jeebun, his former jemidar. The companion who sympathized so strongly in the merits of the mutton, being his inseparable favourite and crony, the glutton, whom we, on a previous occasion, slightly mentioned.

Both stared with surprise, more especially Jeebun, who, after the usual congratulations, evinced much pleasure at seeing his runaway recruit, as he called him. A desultory conversation, as is usual on such occasions, then took place, which was thickly interlarded, on the part of Jeebun, with exclamations concerning Alraschid's amazing good fortune.

"Bless me! you are indeed the luckiest dog I ever heard of," said the Jemidar, after he had, by dint of great attention, made himself partially acquainted with the particulars of his story. "Little did I indeed think, when my trusty matchlock was levelled at the spirited trooper in the jungle, that it was the noble and mighty Aurungzebe I was making sure of. Had I known that, I had doubtlessly played my cards better, and like you, perchance, realized my fortune. With all submission

* May be translated chops—small pieces of meat.

† Meat.

and reverence, however, to the Emperor's will, you should have left me that nimble clever-headed hurkaru ; —a pretty lecture I got from Abdulatiff for his desertion !”

“Your noble master,” responded Alraschid, “is too leal a friend of the Emperor's, to grudge losing a servant in his service.”

“Then he is in the Emperor's service, is he ?” demanded the glutton.

“He is, or was !” replied the other,—“for what has become of him for the last six weeks I cannot conjecture. Before reaching Ougien, he left us without word or warning, nor have I since heard aught about him.”

“That is indeed strange,” said Jeebun, “for I heard of him not a fortnight ago, and pretty work had he been engaged in.”

“What was that ?” asked Alraschid, with anxiety.

“Nothing,” answered Jeebun, looking serious, “short of carrying off virtuous women, in conjunction with one of those debauched villains of fakiers, who have been playing such devilry lately.”

“Indeed, indeed,” cried our hero, as a reason for his esteemed friend's absence, flashed for the first time across his mind. “And what, I prithee, could induce him to be guilty of such depravity ?”

“What could induce him !” reiterated the Jemidar, with that look of silly exultation, which the supremely stupid know how to give, when they dream that they have discovered a flaw in another's shrewdness. “Not love, you may rely ; an article, my son, which will fetch five huzaar rupees* or thereabouts, is too delicate for the stomach of one who has not as many hundred in the wide world. Do you think,” continued he, pointing energetically to a hind quarter of fat kid in the shop before them,—“do you think that greasy cutter of sheep's

* 1000.

12*

throats would dispose of yon uncommonly delicious leg, (which, by the by, Dowlut, put down in your memory) if he could afford to curry it?—No, no—'tis not human nature; as my excellent master, the Rajah, has often said before me."

"Then you are of opinion," replied Alraschid, suppressing his mirth; from finding the glutton's large swollen eyes speculating upon him,—“that my faithful friend has taken it into his head to turn a few gold mohurs, in in this predatory manner?”

"To be sure," responded Jeebun, with a beam of knowingness and delight, at seeing the light of intelligence springing up, for the first time, in his companion's less lucid comprehension. "To be sure;—silver, Alraschid, is silver, whether it be brought in bag of silk or canvass; and little does the fakier stickle at whence or how it comes."

"And whose zenana suffered this sacrilege?" demanded Alraschid.

"One, who well deserved it," answered Jeebun, "if anything can justify such conduct;—it was no less a person than Selim of Ougien, the once great and terrible."

Alraschid, who was now satisfied as to the motives of his friend's departure, could not help muttering a few inaudible expressions of his gratitude, which were, however, taken in a very different acceptance by the Jemidar.

"Yes!" said he vehemently, his large hazy eyes sparkling as he spoke:—"such conduct on the part of your friend, is enough to make you curse the day you were the means of prevailing upon him, to join the Emperor's service. For, however great a villain Selim may be, it in no way palliate's that hurkaru knave's ignominy. But, my dear Sir, how is it that all this time I have forgotten to inform you that, just before I thus unexpectedly met you, I fell in with a slight acquaintance, who made the most particular inquiries after you."

“About me!” said Alraschid, “and what, I pray, may be his name?”

“By our prophet, I forget,” returned Jeebun; “he has some long name or other, and I never was famous for my memory. When I first knew him, he was in the employ of my noble master, and a better horseman or swordsman he never had in his service. Since then, however, he seems to have turned religious, for so his dress and occupation intimated.”

“How?” demanded the other.

“How!” reiterated the Jemidar, “why sure one can tell a priest by his look, as easy as a book by its label; and then I found him in the gardens of the Taj Mahal, where incense is eternally reeking, and Scripture is being chanted;—that’s all I say about it.”

Our hero was quite at a loss to conjecture who this religious person could be, and the more inquiries he made as to his appearance, the more was he perplexed. A person’s curiosity is usually commensurate with his idleness, and as Alraschid had nothing particular to engage his time, he resolved to direct his steps towards the Taj, and ask after this individual, who appeared so anxious, by Jeebun’s account, to see him.

“Well, I will not detain you,” said the Jemidar, after being apprized of his intention, “but I trust you will come to-morrow, and try our cheer, which I know is not to be sneezed at. Dowlut here takes charge of the victualling department, and no secondary consumer is he. I reside for the present at Gool Chund’s, the shroff, at the end of yonder street; he, believe me, will be glad to see you, and if your curry be not as good as ghee can make it, then am I no judge. Besides,” continued he, lowering his head and voice, and squinting furtively round, as if from fear of being overheard, though the precaution he knew was unnecessary, since no dangerous ear was near him, “besides, my good friend, the shroff, if I forget not, has a crypt in his vaults, which contains an article more valuable than his ingots. Trust me, he

has skill, as much as most people, in what is genuine in the way of sherbet," and he repeated his former furtive look in a manner which showed it was assumed, more for the purpose of eulogizing his friend's beverage, than from fear of being detected, in full confession, of a bacchanalian breach of the Koran's precepts.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Hadst thou not been by,
 A fellow, by the hand of nature mark'd,
 Quoted, and sign'd to do a deed of shame,
 This murder had not come into my mind."

SHAKESPEARE.

HOWEVER discordant unlimited monarchical power may be, with our motives of political justice,—and however signal the crimes may be which, under the shadow of its pinions, have stained our nature, there is no doubt, that in many instances it has been productive of much good by fostering and encouraging genius, which must otherwise have expired. Under no other form of government has mankind been more consummately miserable and unenlightened, or on the contrary, more happy, intelligent, and felicitous, in the productions of art and science. Who can so easily direct a people's footsteps into the flowery paths of soothing, civilizing art, taste, and elegance, as a powerful refined Prince?—who can so munificently patronize their innocent allurements?

With respect to India, where, from time immemorial, sceptres have swayed with unrestricted power, this remark applies, though not to its utmost extent. The treasures of her kings have too usually been lavished in silly pomp, and extravagant ostentation, betokening a weakness of the possessors, scarcely recompensed by the intellect and philanthropy of some illustrious sages. Were not this a digression somewhat dry and inappropriate, we might point out some of the reasons why eastern autocrats have been in general but indifferent encouragers

of genius, though numerous splendid exceptions might be adduced. We may, however, state, that a bad and insufficient education is the chief of them. The Timour family were, without compare, most celebrated for their devotedness to learning, and the liberal arts ; and of them Ackbar and Shaw Jehan should be honourably mentioned. It was the latter of these princes who erected the Taj Mahal, and we question if he will not be proverbially remembered by its beauties, when all the other achievements and misfortunes, associated with his name, are forgotten. This, unlike the public works of his predecessors, which (saving Ackbar's tomb) are generally confined to wells, roads, and caravansaries, was intended to astonish and delight by its unparalleled splendour, rather than by its utility. It is the mausoleum of Ajemund Banu—his dearly beloved Sultana, and of himself.

It is situated in a delightful garden, of considerable extent, which is surrounded by a high wall, and lies about a mile below the fort, on the same bank of the Jumna. A terrace and bulwark of solid masonry protect it from any risk of the river's ravages, serving also as a fence against impertinent intrusion. Immediately behind, and a few feet above this, stretches a square platform, of perhaps a hundred and fifty yards extent, composed of white marble ; each slab being finely polished, and fitted accurately together. In the centre of this, like some lovely cluster of pearls, or ostrich eggs in the wilderness, rises the matchless mausoleum.

Imagine a square polygonal building, with a lofty arched entrance, resembling modern gothic, and numerous wide embrasures, covered with costly wavy mosaic, the lines intricately intersecting as the arches taper towards their key stones ; imagine this crowned by a high graceful dome, rising in a gradual imposing swell, and then diminishing into a point, the tenuity of which is relieved by a small gallery,—the whole surmounted with a crescent. Fancy further, this dome, flanked by two smaller ones, supported by pillars, and the three en-

circled by many others, very diminutive, as by an irregularly disposed chaplet. Then, conceive each corner of the fore-mentioned marble platform giving birth to a towering minaret, of feathery lightness, with three circling balustrades ;—and you may then have an indistinct conception of the far-famed Taj Mahal.—Excepting the mosaic work, thrown like the showy bordering of shawls on external parts of the edifice, all we have as yet mentioned is formed of marble, white as the driven snow, or cygnet's down. There are three entrances to the garden, through piles of building, decorated with cupolas and other ornaments, worthy of description, were the interest as easily and surely excited by the pen as the pencil.

If there be a time when a scribbler is prompted to become enraged with his craft and himself, and to regard with ardent uncompromising invidiousness the artist's powers, 'tis when engaged on a subject like the present, —when he is under the necessity of doling out by sorry catalogue like items, a description which canvass could, at a glance, convey. However, to resume :—

The evening was waning ; the sun had dipped his ruddy face in the midst of the river's rapid yet smooth sprayless waters, which glittered like a shoal of sportive dolphins ; and he seemed purposely lingering to take a last long look on the gem before him. The noble minarets stood like genii watchers, throwing far and wide their gigantic shadows ; while a magnificent range of fountains stretching from the mausoleum, to the front entrance of its spacious enclosure, jetted their crystal torrents high into the still air, diffusing to the full foliaged avenue of choice trees a grateful freshness. Some were showering myriads of diamonds, rubies, emeralds —others appeared rapidly revolving cords of gold and silver, dissolving in floods of molten gold and amethyst. A sepulchral and appropriate silence, very far from unpleasant, pervaded the whole : even the fountains bubbled not, and it was probably the very loveliest scene

eye could gaze on, more especially for the first time, as was now the case with Alraschid.

An hour after the late conversation, he was standing solitary on the brink of a beautiful marble reservoir, near the fountains, musing and marvelling on the surrounding fairy splendour. He had not been many minutes in this situation, before he was roused, by seeing a person leisurely approaching along one of those shady avenues which terminate near the reservoir. By his dress, and the stately gravity of his appearance, he was a priest, perhaps the one he expected, and of those to whom was delivered the custody of the tomb, and the officiating of prayers and ceremonies for the deceased Queen.

This clerical personage, on coming closer, stopped, and looked at him with marked curiosity, but Alraschid's astonishment need not be mentioned, when in this functionary he recognised the swarthy features and muscular limbs of Runjeet, his intended but baffled murderer. Although this meeting was expected on one side, both started, for both were for an instant apprehensive of danger, from a remembrance of their last meeting.

"Runjeet!" exclaimed Alraschid, "and in these precincts too as a priest!"

"And if my eyes be not liars," returned the other, regaining his habitual equanimity; "I behold one of fortune,—one of the Emperor's favourites, in as inexplicable circumstances as myself. May I inquire, if your reasons for moping here in this unmilitary costume be not to meet me?"

"Rascal!" responded Alraschid; "could it be you, then, who had the impudence to declare a wish to see me?—You," said he, surveying him with supreme contempt, "who ought to shun me. But I would warn you from again indulging in such a loathsome liberty."

"My business here," replied Runjeet, without in the slightest degree quailing before this burst of indignation, "is too important to permit me to bestow much time upon you;—and therefore, though I did assuredly make

inquiries after you, with a view to obtaining a meeting, —let not the short time I have to spare be wasted; unless the liberty be so unpardonable that we must part. There was one promise, however, son of Ajimut, which I formerly pledged;—you may have forgotten it—I never can;—and that was to be your friend. My forfeited life was the reason and equivalence—and spite of your contempt and scorn, that promise I will to death maintain. It was, indeed, to substantiate that promise I sought this interview.”

“And how!” demanded Alraschid, scornfully, “am I to believe that you, who have but once come across me, and then as my intended destroyer, can now prove a benefactor? or in what way do you propose demonstrating so extraordinary a change.”

“If,” returned Runjeet, “you deem my breast so perfectly steeled against every whisper of gratitude and compunction, as to be incapable of feeling their influence; you may, at least, allow it to be susceptible of revenge.”

“I should certainly be more inclined,” said Alraschid, “to attribute any of your actions to such a motive, than to gratitude;”—and he could not help smiling in such a credulous way as escaped not Runjeet’s notice. He was evidently much mortified, and gnawed his thin nether lip in a way which showed that vexation and disappointment, had well nigh, for the time, got the better of all his vaunted good intentions.

“Believe, but what I have to unfold,” said he at length, “and assign to me whatever motives you choose.”

“Well, unfold what you please,” said Alraschid, turning himself away; “only be brief, for I choose not to devote more time than is necessary to this conference.”

“Nor can I blame you,” returned Runjeet, “since I know the dangers which surround you, though you yourself are ignorant of them. You have been apprized, that fear, more than affection, induces me to serve Omar the magician, (although certainly my fakier propensities

and attachment to their cause make me respect him as a zealous and able leader) and often have I sworn to shake myself free of his trammels as soon as an opportunity might offer. But I may safely say, I never have had one till now, for so totally different from the rest of mankind is the dwarf, in his pursuits and speculations, that it often is most dangerous to approach him, when all appears most secure. His ways, Alraschid, are trackless;—his actions throw no warning shadows;—and he comes like the tempest, and so he departs—whence or whither, who can tell!”

“As far as actions and feelings are concerned,” observed Alraschid, “he is different from all human kind.”

“He is,” rejoined the other,—“and you, I am sorry to say, speak from what you have yourself suffered. I grant the magician’s malignity to be quite extraordinary; yet does it by its peerlessness in a measure hide itself, and become an accomplishment. You, of all others, have smarted beneath his fangs—and yet”—said he in a low sanguinary voice; “I could in a few minutes put it in your power to revenge everything;—aye, and that as bitterly to him, as unexpectedly.”

“Tell me! tell me!” exclaimed his companion, starting with emotion;—“tell me how! and you render me ever happy; every obligation you owe, if you owe me any, shall be in one moment liquidated,—leaving me for ever your debtor.”

“If I do,” returned Runjeet, “it is as much from a wish to serve you, as a detestation of the most consummate of villains.”

“Of a fiend!” returned Alraschid. “But I am unarmed; have you no dagger?”

“What!” exclaimed Runjeet, with an indignant scowl, “a dagger!—No, no;—suppose not that I hinted at the destruction of the wretch: far be that from either of us; even were it possible. Nay! to reason on the thing dispassionately, would it not be disgraceful

for you, carried away by dark revenge, to commit an act which would destroy the pillar which upholds our plans?—the very marrow of all hope, and likelihood of good fortune!—for in conferring a private favour, I must not forget I am publicly interested in his success!—Verily, in the present train of events, I would sooner sacrifice father—mother—aye, my own son, were he smiling in my eyes—than the crime contaminated Omar! _____,”

“Father!—mother!”—ejaculated Alraschid with a voice of anguish.

“Yes,” resumed the other, who was one of the rebel fakiers; “kith and kin should perish before the magician, whose head and hand can alone achieve our venturesome intentions, and repair the late loss of our devoted Queen, if our hopes be not wholly blasted. Promise, therefore,—swear,—not to attempt violence, or—but I fear in this to trust even your irreproachable honour; so violently do you seem excited.”

“I will promise—swear—anything you require,” gasped forth the youth, striving, and with some success, to assume a calmness quite discordant with his feelings,—but which vow, he, for the first-time inwardly resolved on breaking.

“Enough,” answered Runjeet, “I presumed too far, when I questioned your firmness:—ought against your flawless honour, one who knows you, could never insinuate. Do you now confess my friendship sincere?—but come,” continued he, without awaiting any reply;—“to show you, I utter not common-place sentiments of esteem,—hollow—mere fulsome compliments—I have a dagger—there, take it;—and, now reason has mastered your passion, I have such an estimation of your word, as to know ’tis useless.” Here he drew from out the folds of his girdle, one of those keen zig-zagged poinards, whose ruffled stab is so proverbially lethal.

His companion, who paid no attention to this brief panegyric, was stretching his hand towards the weapon,

with an eagerness which might have betokened the dire purpose rankling his heart ;—but remembering how this very abruptness would belie his promise, he checked the action, and accepting it with a leisurely though agitated grasp, he, unobserved by the donor, thrust it into his girdle with such a nervous, overjoyous clutch, as would certainly have told him, that if an opportunity presented itself, Alraschid would prove, for once, foresworn.

“ Now, follow my steps,” whispered the guide ; “ and let not your lips be separated.”

He followed, but could not, from almost delirious anxiety at first help staggering. A few paces brought them to the stairs, which conduct to the platform, and having gained this, Runjeet crossed towards that minaret which stands on the left hand nearest the river. By this time, night had, with tropical rapidity, nearly installed herself, and the universal silence of life expressly proclaimed her authority. The dim pearl-eyed moon was gradually growing brighter, and her sickly rays began perceptibly to dawn o’er the surrounding magnificence, like delicate silvery gauze work. In the gloomier distance were piled the massive indistinct buildings of the fort, with here and there its glittering gilded turrets rising proudly ; and between all this, the lofty, precipitous and unverdured banks formed a gentle curve, along which rolled noiselessly the deep black waters.

His guide having unlocked a carved and brass adorned door, with every precaution against noise, slipped off his shoes, and Alraschid followed his example. They then commenced mounting the marble steps which wound to the very top of the minaret. Before, however, they had ascended half a dozen yards, Runjeet suddenly stopped, and after pondering a few seconds, he whispered : “ Pass me, and proceed, ’twere better I keep watch—and remember your promise,”

It was pitch dark, and our hero had some difficulty in climbing the steps without occasionally stumbling, being forced to feel his way by the wall ; nor was his footing

rendered at all more secure by a suspicion, which then entered his mind, of being ensnared. The last extraordinary suggestion of Runjeet led to this; for against whom, was he to watch? moreover, was it likely the magician would be found in such a situation, locked up by one of his most worthless dependants? but, on the other hand, if treachery to himself were meant, would Runjeet have voluntarily presented him with the means of repelling or avenging it? These doubts were again allayed, if not overcome, by remembering that Omar was not to be met with like other men, as all his rencontres with him well testified.

He accordingly proceeded, grasping determinedly his poniard, and all eye, all ear for the worst that might befall. His hand, immediately after this, came in contact with something on the wall which moved; it was, however, but a harmless frightened lizard. A straggling reluctant beam of moonlight now flickered above, without at all effectually illuminating the profound gloom, but which at every step grew more distinctive. He thought he heard breathing, heavy breathing, as of one slumbering—he stood motionless and breathless to listen, and plainly distinguished regular long drawn inspirations, but scarcely so loud as the eager knockings of his own heart. Alraschid could no longer control his feelings, but with moistless lips and burning brow ascended the remaining steps in a more hurried manner, and another turning brought him up to one of those circling terraces, by means of which the adjoining steps were perfectly lighted.

On the uppermost of them lay a diminutive figure, coiled up amongst robes and shawls, buried in deep sleep. Had life—futuraity depended on that convulsive moment's mastery of passion—Alraschid had perished. The demon was in his soul, gloating on the temporary prostration of every principle and virtue; for one moment the blackened ruins of his father's house, o'er which hovered his own pale features, rose before his

eyes, and, with the nerves of hatred, vengeance, fury—he raised his arm, and plunged to the hilt his weapon in the defenceless wretch before him; a thrilling shriek succeeded, to which the winding cavities responded, and before the other descending stab could be delivered, the form of Noorun started from the quickly ensanguined robes.

Another shriek—another louder, wilder wail succeeded, but not from her. “Noorun! murder!”—were his only exclamations: for words were no representatives of his feelings and his horror. To clasp the wounded, fainting girl to his breast, and burst into a flood of useless tears, was the first impulse of returning recollection. Poor compensation alas, for a disaster which, but for the violation of his promises, had never occurred.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ He who could first two gentle hearts unbind,
And rob a lover of his weeping fair ;
Hard was the man, but harder, in my mind,
The lover still, who died not of despair.”

HAMMOND.

ON regaining the power of reflection, the first thing of which our hero was conscious, was a loud unnatural laugh, echoing through the minaret, followed by this exclamation, “ Remember another time, to place more reliance in Runjeet’s vengeance, than gratitude.” Neither the motive, nor the meaning of this diabolical taunt were appreciated by the distracted youth, as he rushed headlong down stairs, to procure some assistance; nor was it likely, that in such agitation he should immediately suspect the profound villany of a miscreant, who, by feigning friendship and gratitude, had cast a die, the chances of which must run in his favour, for the most dismal revenge; though, nevertheless, a transient bliss was on the throw.

But the wretch’s words needed little interpretation, and by the time he had reached the bottom steps, the horrid and successful design, worthy of a demon, flashed across his mind in all its enormity. Fury, bitter grief, and a more bitter self-reproach, the offspring of despair, got the better of his reason so completely, that for a little, he was hardly aware of what he did, and not the least, that the minaret door was securely locked, and he a prisoner.

For himself he cared not, an idea of death or danger had no place in his mind; but through it buzzed a

throng of thoughts, each like the bee laden with the wax of remorse, and bitterness, which, having deposited its load, flitted away to make room for others equally distressing; he would have reascended to Noorun, but his limbs refused, and faint and feverish, he, with a palpitating heart, sunk for a minute against the door, quite exhausted and moaning,—as if in the throbs of death.

“Who is there?” demanded suddenly a gruff voice, “and what ails you?”

Though Alraschid heard this distinctly enough, he returned no answer, when he was again accosted.

“Art ill or well—man or woman—priest or prisoner?”

“Yes, a prisoner,” said Alraschid, who perceived it was not Runjeet’s voice, “one who stands much in need of liberty and assistance.”

“Then,” replied the stranger, “remove yourself immediately from behind the door, and by Heaven’s grace, I will set you free.”

No sooner almost was this said, than he on the outside bestowed some heavy kicks on the door, which made the whole minaret reverberate, but although this proved the mettle of the bolts and stanchions, they seemed much too firm to give way; a pause succeeded, during which his deliverer seemed to be stepping back, to gain some impetus, for instantly a rapid clattering was heard, followed by such a prodigious bang, as sent the door completely off its lower hinges, making it dangle like the broken wing of some gigantic yellow gander: so impetuous was this charge, that the individual had some difficulty in regaining his equilibrium sufficiently to prevent his falling headlong on the prisoner. Having, however, managed to regain this, he drew himself up in such a manner, as to stand but half erect, in order that, by having his person thus bent, he might obtain a better scrutiny of the person he had befriended,—the dusky recess in which Alraschid reclined, rendering this, moreover, almost indispensable. This stooping attitude, and the bright moonbeams, gave our hero all the advan-

tage of being the first to recognize his trusty, firm-hearted friend Buccas, the fakier.

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed he, raising his hands,—“do I see Alraschid murdered!—then have I toiled in vain; and the devil has, I may say, in the impiety of my soul, frustrated Heaven.”—This supposition was indeed but natural, seeing that our hero was disfigured with blood.

"No, Buccas!" exclaimed Alraschid wildly; "I am unhurt—but am myself an assassin!" and he pointed in an agonizing manner to the stairs.

The fakier stood for awhile speechless from amazement. "What can all this mean?" said he, at length;—"Oh, that my eyes may not have to meet more of that demon Omar's atrocity!" and without waiting for any explanation, he sprung up stairs. In a few minutes he descended slowly, bearing the senseless body of Noorun, and exclaiming—"Oh unhappy day!—what other wretch could have done this!—what hand but the magician's have mangled so good and beautiful a creature!"

"'Twas mine;—of me accursed and faithless!" cried Alraschid, clasping her to his heart—"mine, mine!" and, as he muttered these last words, his reason seemed reeling into madness.

"Allah!" ejaculated the fakier, "can it so be, that Ajimut's once doting son has done this thing?—Then," continued he, after a pause, during which the tears flowed plentifully down his cheek;—"my heart tells me you must have been again abused:—but let us not lose time in wordy coil,—look you to the maiden, whilst I run to the river for some water.

Alraschid had previously bandaged, with a portion of his turban, the lady's arm, which was pierced through and through near the shoulder, and the only further relief he could now afford, was supporting her head till Buccas re-appeared. Before this happened, to his great joy, she recovered from her swoon, and although unable

to speak, her looks pronounced her conviction of the unintentional cruelty of her lover, as well as the overflowing fulness of her own bosom. How powerful is woman in her adversity ! how sublimely stable is her fortitude ! how steadfast, too, in mildness is her long-suffering !—her tongue upbraids not him who may have bruised her. She may weep, but her tears will fall unmingled with despite against the author of her anguish—they will fall, blended with pity for her oppressor's guilt, as well as sorrow at the unworthy appreciation of her love. Her sadness; though silent, is an appeal irresistible, even by savage barbarism ; it is then the natural loveliness of the female mind shines conspicuous ; its moral perfection towers over that of the harsher sex ; its unselfishness, its something little less than divinity !

The daughter of Selim being refreshed by the water which Buccas brought with praiseworthy despatch, in a rude earthen jar, endeavoured to soothe her lover's terror, instead of deprecating his hastiness,—and the disinterested kindness of feeling which prompted this, pierced more poignantly his heart, who knew intuitively what was passing in hers.

“Courage,” exclaimed Buccas, joyfully, on hearing Noorun speak.—“I trust, matters are not so desperate !—we must, however, at all events, convey the lady out of this place, (aye, and promptly,) for should Omar now return, and he is not far off, this would be but the prologue to a deeper tragedy.”

These words appeared to revive the maiden more than any restorative hitherto applied—and as she grasped the hand of her betrothed, she hastily exclaimed—“Yes, let us leave this dismal place. Worlds would not bribe me to risk again falling into that wretch's hands. Let us make all haste, for believe me, I am now strong enough to accompany you ;—the cruel Omar cannot be very distant.”

“But a short time ago,” said Alraschid sadly, “I had

thought to have for ever freed us from that being's tyranny, and this—this is the miserable result."

"Away with all this weakness!" cried Buccas; "if you have sufficient strength, young man, take the Omrah's daughter in your arms, and follow me with the strictest silence; or, if you are too weak for such a burden, I will assist you."

"Lead on!" said Alraschid, lifting up Noorun, who threw one arm affectionately round his neck;—Buccas did so without another word.

On reaching the marble platform which glittered in the moon's refulgence, like a sheet of untarnished silver, their guide assumed a more authoritative manner, and, after a short halt, he said in a very commanding tone: "My children, there is after all but one probability of eluding the fell magician,—and that is, by procuring a boat, and making instantly for the fort."

"For the fort!" exclaimed Alraschid, with horror; "why, that is her dungeon—her grave!"

"No matter," returned Buccas, impatiently; "we cannot now spare a moment for explanations;—you must rely utterly on me. It is only there that this lady can for the present be secure.—Where that small fire twinkles on the river's edge, there is, I know, a boat to be obtained; and whilst I advance along the bank, do ye conceal yourselves in that thick shrubbery, near yonder tree. Be circumspect and silent, otherwise one of you may never again know peace of mind; whilst I will rival the antelope in the fleetness of my motions."

To this the lovers agreed, and entering the thicket, Alraschid deposited his precious burden at the very tree designated. Solicitous as Alraschid might well be about Noorun, his curiosity to learn how she had gotten into so extraordinary a situation, overcame the dread of agitating her by speaking, and he earnestly expressed this wish. To this request, the overjoyed girl immediately complied, prefacing her narration with a voluntary kiss,

which enhanced inestimably its interests in the eyes of Alraschid.

"I told you," said the lady, "in one of those few letters which I found means of sending,—but which I doubt ever reached you, how Omar accused my father of being your deliverer, insinuating, moreover, that his reason for giving you freedom, was to avoid being proved the author, or rather the instigator of Mootee's murder. My father fears Omar, and is wholly at his mercy, from a cause I can hardly believe, though he acquainted me with it."

"It is reported," said Alraschid, "that the dwarf's father came to an untimely end, and of that also he accuses his uncle."

"Such is the dreadful deed to which I allude," said Noorun, "though I cannot believe my father guilty of his death!—He has committed great cruelties, but Heaven forefend he should have that to answer for. Oh no! Selim, violent and headstrong as he is, I think, could never, though he confessed it, imbrue his hands in a brother's blood!"

"I hope not," replied the lover very doubtfully; "but no one is likely to make a confession of such a nature, without being somewhat implicated in a crime;—but, I prithee, resume your story, and move not so much your arm, which must increase the painfulness. Hush! my love, did you not hear footsteps?"

"No," whispered the lady, after a pause,—“I hear nothing.”

"'Twas some bird nestling itself for the night," said he;—"but I hinder you from proceeding."

Noorun, who, as much from affection as weakness, reclined her head on Alraschid's breast, smiled—and whilst he parted the long dark ringlets from her fair smooth brow, she thus continued:—

"So boundless was the fury of Omar on that occasion, when I so narrowly escaped his dagger, that I had no doubt anxiety for having his crimes kept secret,

would have ensured me from being further disgusted by his addresses. Imagine, therefore, my astonishment at his audacious effrontery and recklessness, when, shortly after that memorable night, he again claimed my hand;—but surprise quickly gave way to horror, to distraction, on finding my father, formerly so indulgent, bent inexorably on my accepting his proposals. I could no longer repress my indignation, my loathing, my agony,—and I instantly disclosed to my father all his nephew's villany and hypocrisy."

"And did he not strike the serpent to the earth?" demanded Alraschid.

"You shall hear," returned Noorun. "There must be some spell, some unholy influence, by which he holds dominion over my father,—even putting out of the question the death of his brother, else Selim, acute as he is in all other matters, could never be so unaccountably infatuated, with respect to everything regarding Omar. However, without being in the least degree abashed or disconcerted by my exposure, he, with a craft and tact, which amazed and confused me, turned the whole relation against myself. All the consciousness of perfect innocence, and confidence in my father's love, could not prevent me becoming speechless from confusion, when he openly blasted my reputation—pronouncing you the worthless author of my ruin."

"Fiend!" exclaimed Alraschid.

"And my father," continued Noorun, bursting into tears, "believed this cunningly conceived tale, which my blushes and faltering denial confirmed, as also a letter of yours, which Omar intercepted. He spurned me away as a loathsome wretch, and, deaf to all my protestations of innocence, cursed me!—yes, he, who once was so fond, cursed his child with the deep irrevocable bitterness of an unchangeable conviction in her dishonour."

The lady was too much overpowered to proceed further, and her lover was no less affected, though from

more complicated feelings;—sorrow at her sorrow—with pride and joy—overwhelming joy, from feeling, as it were working within his very soul, how pure and disinterestedly sincere was the love of that fair being, whose bright streaming eyes he then fruitlessly wiped; one, who to him was dear as life, eternity, or any wish to which his wildest wishes could extend. Oh, how priceless is real love!—thou manna of the heart, where is thine equivalence!—where can ye be purchased!—thou mysterious idiosyncrasy of spirits revelling in sympathetic delight, who can declare thy blessedness!

“All customary freedom,” continued at length the lady, “was henceforth denied me, and, shut up closely in one dark miserable suit of rooms, I should assuredly have pined away with pure melancholy, had not another of my cousin’s atrocities been followed, to myself, at least, with pleasing consequences. You know the fate of your parents?”

“Alas!” replied Alraschid;—“my friend and preserver, the fakier, was an eye-witness of their hapless sufferings.”

“Your sister,” resumed Noorun, “was on the evening of that fatal day brought a prisoner, with her mother, to the castle. She became my companion, and you may imagine how invaluable a friend and confidant she proved in such cheerless circumstances. But listen:—I am certain I hear some one pressing through the shrubbery.”

“Distinctly enough,” whispered Alraschid; “’twill be the trusty Buccas. Let us, however, keep close, lest it should turn out otherwise.”—All was however, again silent, and her protector, pronouncing the agitation of the leaves to have been occasioned by some feathered prowler of the night, besought Noorun to continue her story.

“Well,” said she, “all was agreed on,—my doom sealed,—and my father, without seeing me, had ordered me to prepare to accept of Omar. I need not attempt

any description of my misery. You were, I knew not where,—for father Ibrahim had left our neighbourhood, and I received, as you know,” said she, darting a pretended frown into his eyes, “for a long, very long time, no letters; though I cannot help thinking almost all you wrote were intercepted by the magician.”

“I wrote many,” replied Alraschid, earnestly.

“Then it must have been so,” said Nóorun; “however, to resume:—I had still one dark but firm consolation: sooner than be united to my cousin, I resolved on self-destruction; and, from frequent contemplation of the deed, it had become to me divested of every terror.”

Alraschid clasped her to his breast, whilst a hundred expressions of the fondest love escaped him.

“You will wonder, I am sure,” continued the young lady, questioning him as directly with her eyes as words—“how I escaped, after all, becoming the magician’s wife, without suicide—or elopement?”

“I am all amazement,” answered he.

“Omar,” resumed the lady, “previous to the ceremonial, demanded an interview, which I could not refuse. At this, I plainly declared I would not be guilty of disobedience to my father, but immediately after the marriage I would poison myself. This disconcerted him.”

“Daughter of Selim!” said he,—“I well know how cordially—how unchangingly you abhor me,—you are, however, mine—not to be doted on—loved.—Think ye, I take up my time about such baubles as your sex?—No;—’tis as a tool, an instrument, I require you, and your fate is fixed.”

“My fate is in my own hands,” replied I; “your love is of as little moment as your hatred; and, as to making me an instrument or tool, I neither understand your meaning, nor feel any concern to do so: your dominion over me will be but short.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Omar, assuming one of those hideous frowns which you well remember;—“is there, do you think, no alternative save death? I can propose

another. Would you not choose, sooner than become mine, to be a Sultana—the despotic mistress of an Emperor?”

“My indignation at these words made me almost spit at the wretch,—and but for a burst of tears, I believe my heart would at that moment have broken.”

“It is at least an alternative, said my cousin, with an indifference more cruel than murder. At that moment the thought struck me, that this proposal was the only existing hope I had. At the worst, I could but die; and I was resolved never to die dishonoured. Accordingly, I made him repeat and explain his intentions, which plainly were to carry me off, unknown to my father, and present me as a slave to Shaw Jehan. Besides obtaining some political point by this present, he declared it would be to my advantage, as my beauty,” faltered Noorun, blushing, “might almost ensure my becoming the favourite, and a Begum.”

Alraschid's brows had gradually fretted together, and his heart beat more quickly, as the lady, thus, with her natural open-heartedness, unfolded these flagitious schemes; and he was about to have said something not very laudatory of Noorun's prudence, when he again thought he heard the noise as of footsteps. It however ceased, or rather he was mistaken, from the anxious expectation of Buccas,—and the Rajah's daughter thus proceeded:—

“Nay, look not sour, for although this determination may at first sight appear desperate, and wanting modesty, yet was it the only chance left, as I before said, of saving myself from marrying Omar; and, in the opinion of Buccas, the only one of eventually escaping from him altogether.”

“How came you acquainted with the fakier?” demanded her lover.

“We have no time at present,” answered Noorun, “for entering into details; but this much, I may say,—his noble character was long known to me, before I saw

him; and after hearing, as I did, a hundred times from Rhada, the heroic manner in which he rescued her and your mother, I felt secure in his honour, and trusted myself wholly to his advice. A few days before you arrived against the castle, Omar took advantage of the uproar and dismay, occasioned by the expectation of your force, and sent me off to Agra with Johorun, escorted by a band of ruffians. Of this, the fakier, who was ever on the watch, soon got notice, and having dogged us for several days, he at length fell on our convoy; with two brave friends, and delivered us."

"One of whom," said Alraschid, "was doubtlessly the harkaru; but I interrupt you."

"I have but little more to say," replied Noorun,—"but don't you think Buccas has been a long time absent?"

"It seems to us longer than perchance it really is," said Alraschid; "but proceed in your story."

"Well then," continued the lady, "you must know, that Johorun and myself had scarcely become tired of congratulating one another on the successful issue of our enterprise, and praising Buccas and his comrades, when we were overtaken by the most dreadful storm. The rain fell in torrents, and the lightning, which was fearful, killed a bullock, with its poor driver, within twenty paces of our tent. This was pitched with the greatest difficulty, before the wind became settled into a hurricane. Hardly had the storm abated, before we were alarmed by shrieks and cries; and in a few minutes we were almost heartbroken to find ourselves once more in the hands of our enemies. It appears that Omar's party, though discomfited and dispersed with the loss of one life, had rallied afterwards, and being reinforced by some other villains; they had put in execution this night attack, which ended in their favour. It would, however, not have turned out so, had not our party been taken completely by surprise, two of them being made prison-

ers, by the cutting of their tent ropes, before they had the least suspicion of danger.

"Then how did Buccas escape?" asked Alraschid:—"for I fear he alone survives so extraordinary a reverse of fortune."

"That he will best explain," rejoined Noorun, "for I know little or nothing of what has happened since that eventful night, nor have I indeed seen or heard of him till now. We proceeded on our journey under our former escort, (though from the time we have taken I imagine, it was not by the most direct route,) and arrived in Agra yesterday. Early this afternoon, I was separated from Johorun, and conveyed in a close litter, as I thought, to the fort, but, on alighting, found myself in this scene of fairy splendour. Save one of the attendants, Runjeet, the rest immediately withdrew, and not another being was near me but Omar,—and he was kinder than he ever had been. He informed me that he momentarily expected a visit from one of Shaw Jehan's household, and bid me keep up my spirits as I would, in the course of a few hours, be lodged safely in the palace. He, after this, with many compliments and praises on my resignation, (as he called it) brutally locked me up in the dark stair of that minaret, saying, as he did so, it was but for a minute, and that he would not be far away. What a consolation!—But I am growing tedious.

"However," continued Noorun, without making any pause—"I must say why I climbed to the top of the stairs,—and that was to throw myself from the balcony. I will not try to tell you the misery I was in at that moment—the tears I shed, the sad prayers I raised to heaven. I remember nothing more till I was awakened from a deep sleep by you," and clasping Alraschid, she ended her narration with a flood of tears, which sprung, much more from happiness than a remembrance of by-gone suffering.

It may not, perhaps, raise Alraschid in the reader's

estimation, to confess that he could not refrain from sympathising in this weakness. Yet was it so;—for although almost choked in the struggle to assert his manliness, it was of no avail. He was, however, recalled to the possession of his feelings by another distinct rustling amongst the surrounding shrubs. This became immediately too distinct to be mistaken for anything caused by a bird, and soon after, like an apparition, not the anxiously expected Buccas, but the diminutive figure of the Magician himself passed before them, and within a dozen paces of their tree.

Nobrun, trembling with terror, clung to her protector, without speaking a word, whilst he felt a sickening longing to rush upon him with the dagger, which he still clutched, and was hindered only by the fear of leaving her alone.

The magician, who had not discovered them, proceeded with a thoughtful and slow step to the terrace of the Taj, which he paced backwards and forwards in a way which showed the abstraction of his thoughts. The eyes of the lovers were riveted on his motions with the most intense interest, when they were again alarmed by the noise of some one penetrating the shrubbery;—it was Buccas. Before he could speak, Alraschid recognized him, and seizing his arm, pointed wildly to the dwarf, who sat on one of the balustrades. From the agitation he displayed in doing this, Buccas instantly conjectured, with correctness, what the object was, although a few seconds elapsed ere he could discover anything; for so pigmy was he when thus coiled up, and being moreover obscured by a shadow of one of the minarets, that but for the whiteness of a shawl he wore, the eye might easily have missed him in its range. His consternation was too overpowering, on ascertaining who he was, to be concealed by his features, though he had sufficient self-command not to betray, by a single expression, all the dangers he contemplated.

"I have a dingee,"* whispered he,—“but,”—and he hesitated,—“it will require every precaution to elude Omar’s observation. I wish to Heaven the villain boatmen will make no jabbering.

Most of their path to the river was concealed by the trees and shrubs, but here and there wide walks intersected it, to cross which, without being seen by Omar, who sat fronting them, was next to impossible. Fortune now appeared to favour them, for the dwarf, relinquishing his seat, retired to the other side of the terrace. The party who had gained the first of these paths, saw, to their inexpressible delight, his disgusting figure gradually disappear in the ebon shadows of the Taj, and soon afterwards the building itself intervened betwixt them.

“Forward!” exclaimed Buccas, joyfully;—“Follow me, and have stout hearts, for Providence prospers us.”

Alraschid, who felt himself gifted with supernatural strength, from the excitement of such circumstances, lifted Noorun in his arms, and kept close on the heels of their guide, who proceeded towards the Jumna, at a pace little suited for one laden like his companion. The boat was quickly reached, and words would delay the despatch with which they simultaneously deposited therein their precious freight, and pushed from the shore. Not a syllable was spoken; and the two fishermen, who had received previous instructions, instantly plied their paddles, with a precaution and nervousness, indicative of the no every-day remuneration they expected. They had not proceeded three boat-lengths before a head crowned with a high tartar cap, appeared above the bulwark which defends the mausoleum from the stream, and which was almost instantly withdrawn.

“Tano, tano!† my brave sons!” exclaimed Buccas,—“a round dozen as bright gold mohurs as ever glistened in the Emperor’s treasury, are yours.”

To this the watermen responded a suppressed hy ya!

* Small boat.

† Pull.

hy ya! bestowing at the same time an increased vigour to their strokes. As much for concealment, as to avoid the current, they rowed close along the abrupt and bare banks, which cast a broad irregular belt of darkness on the water. Nearly the whole distance to the fort had been accomplished by them, at this speed, when, from one of the obscure gullies in the bank, now crowded with buildings, a canoe carrying three persons, shot out with a velocity equal to its unexpectedness. Apprehension and terror held them tongue bound, as the skiff rapidly neared them, till Buccas broke the silence with a groan and the exclamation,—“Prophet of God! ’tis Omar. All is over,” said he, “we are lost, because we are unarmed!—Pull, ye dogs! ’tis for your lives, as well as ours! believe me, there shall be no survivors.”

“There shall not!” said Alraschid, with the firmness of despair, whilst he held up his dagger, “Noorun, we shall never again be separated!”

“Come,” cried Buccas, “instead of letting ourselves be thus easily taken, let us lend a hand ourselves to the oar, who knows what may happen—we may fall in with some boat or other that may assist us; could we even reach the shore we might escape.”

The four now exerted themselves with a manliness which would have ensured success, had their bark been of a lighter and better construction; but besides being flat bottomed, it was heavy and broad at the bows, whilst their pursuers had all the advantage arising from the very reverse of these circumstances. It is, therefore, not surprising that the united struggles of our party proved, to a certain extent, unavailable,—for although still-a-head, the skiff gained rapidly upon them, and ere long it was within eighty yards. At its bow sat the Magician, with a matchlock in his hand, and as they drew nearer and nearer, he seemed the more uncertain which individual to single out for first slaking his fury;—meanwhile, his sparkling crime-expressive eyes glanced with the fervour of certain revenge, as it gloated on the victims.

"Old man!" said Buccas, addressing the boatman, whom he was with might and main assisting,—“If you have children whom you love, think on them now!—for as surely as you are old enough to have a score, if that skiff comes a few yards nearer, one of us must perish—pull then!” Scarcely had he pronounced these words, before the dwarf's piece was discharged, and the old man, dropping his oar with a convulsive start, fell. For a short time his shrieks were piercing, as the blood flowed profusely from his breast, through the left side of which the ball had passed. A few short groans succeeded, during which the muscles of his hands were tensely closed, as if dissolution were a manual conflict with the grisly king of terrors. He then suddenly raised himself on his stretched forth legs and arms, and fell lifeless on his face.

Alraschid was too much interested in the effect of Omar's next discharge to bestow much reflection on this commencement of the butchery, and he placed himself before Noorun, so as to shield her effectually, unless he was in the first place perforated; exerting at the same time all his powers to inspire her with hope and courage. When this wretched man was shot, they had actually past the fort, and were directing their course for the ghaut near it, so that they were in the very centre of the city. The instant this occurred, the other boatman relinquished his oar, and threw himself into the stream with such precipitancy, as made it impossible for Alraschid to have prevented him, even if he had suspected his intentions. Meanwhile, Noorun fainted, which appeared to Alraschid, at that trying juncture, a circumstance rather joyful than otherwise, since his death struggle would not be witnessed by her, whose feelings had been already too deeply, too excruciatingly harrowed.

Left solely to the gloomy current, which was neither regular nor impetuous, but formed such sluggish eddies, as are called back water, their boat was whirling slowly round and round, bearing placidly its devoted burden to—

wards destruction. In its very motion there was something funereal—chilly, inflexibly death-like, which carried with it more terror than the unshrouded face of death.

If there be a time when the soul of man is cursed with a pang, prophetic of the horrid hell which divine indignation can hereafter brand thereon, 'tis the brief burning contemplation of unlooked for, inevitable dissolution. Fortunately, however, the duration of pain, as of pleasure, is proportionate to its intensity, and the torrent is too overwhelming for us to bear more than a lightning-like scanning of the grisly phantom;—the dizzied mind seeks refuge in religion, or in settled despair, and not unfrequently finds relief in a total suspension of her workings.

Alraschid, after the first conviction—the agonizing conviction of being in a few moments separated from Noorun, relapsed into a despondency, natural to the hopelessness of their situation. Yet did he not despair;—for his determination was, the instant Omar fired, if he escaped the shot, to plunge, dagger in hand, into the tide, and grapple with the murderer. Why he had not, already fired, astonished him, though this might in cooler moments have been easily resolved, by reflecting that he shielded with his person one, whose life, both had different reasons for preserving; and yet Buccas presented a fair and isolated mark.

The parties were now within twenty yards of each other, and already had the Magician thrice raised, and as often again lowered, his tube, without discharging it.

“Hah!” said Omar, and his hoarse voice came with a dismaying distinctness along the waters—“so soon again across my path!—remember my parting words to you! You shall not a second time escape me on this element!—let go the lady,—the false traitress who has disposed thus sillily of your lamp of life. Believe me, it shall not burn so long as a silly Hindoo’s offering on the Ganges.—Let go the lady, I say!—unless you wish a companion on your journey.—Ha!”—and with a grin

of demoniac satisfaction, so satanic in its expression as to wither the very blood oppressed brain of his victim, he deliberately pointed his matchlock, awaiting an opportunity, by the drifting of the boat, to fire without injuring Noorun. The youth uttered not a reply, but with his eye fixed on the dwarf, and his hand upon his poniard, he awaited the worst.—Instantly a flash of fire severed the murky ill defined haze, which cinctured the lower walls and battlements of the fort, and as instantly Omar's boat and all its crew were scattered in the river.

So thought-like in quickness was this; so miraculously preservative the moment, that Alraschid was staggered in the belief of what he saw. But the providential deed was done;—and the bloody tinge of the water;—the body of the Magician torn, shattered, and rendered more hideous than ever by the shot, and the weak ineffectual struggles of his two drowning and mangled companions,—one of whom was Runjeet, were still before his eyes. Throwing himself on his knees, our hero offered up to his Maker in one short ejaculation, as heart-felt a prayer of gratitude as ever reached the throne of Heaven; nor was he aware that beside him knelt the unbelieving Fakier. For a moment he hung over Noorun—over Noorun rescued, and, clasping her to his heart, wept more bitterly than the weakest of her sex. But if tears be interpreters of the heart, it was no selfish, nor unmanly burst.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"What! you are as a candle,
The better part burnt out."

HENRY IV. *

THE concluding chapter of a story is generally like the end of a feast, little better than the licking of platters, which one has before seen to better purpose. It not unfrequently resembles the inspection of some battered veteran corps, after its services, in which some of the deserving are well pensioned, and the unworthy condemned to punishment or disgrace. True it is, that sometimes the crafty fire-side historian, finishes his handy-work with some incident, formerly skilfully concealed, or ambiguously hinted at; or perchance he may astonish with some unexpected novelty—the last portion of his tale proving the most curious, like the rattle of the snake, the scorpion's sting, or the dying gasp of an expiring lamp. No such craft, genius, or interesting hypocrisy, however, belong to us, and we must corroborate in our tail piece what we confessed in our preface—that to expect any mosaic dove-tailed legend from us, is to expect manna, where there is little dew—and balm without a Gilead.

Accordingly, we must, to the best of our poor restricted ingenuity, muster our few characters together in the old humdrum manner. But before doing this, we must explain how it happened, that destruction reached Omar in so providential a moment, as also some other circumstances.

We have long lost sight of Ulluddeen;—it must be

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remembered how he was left alone in the vast camp, whilst Alraschid was conducted to the presence of the Emperor. During this time, he was astonished by seeing Buccas sitting within twenty yards of him, and conversing seriously with an individual, whose mud bespattered shoes and clothes told him of hard travelling. This was Ramjohnny. As Alraschid's first impulse was in similar circumstances, the hurkaru sought to give the alarm of thieves, and get them apprehended; but this was prevented by the fakier, who, after recognizing him, explained most satisfactorily the reasons why they had attacked and plundered Alraschid. He, moreover, expressed his sorrow, at not being able to see our hero, as he was about to leave the camp, and there were some matters of importance connected with him, which he would have wished to disclose.

The unfortunate fate of his family, which he *durst not* have revealed to the young man himself, he, however, detailed to Ulluddeen, on receiving a solemn promise, that he would not again repeat the facts. He then also explained his plan of rescuing the females by the kind co-operation of Ramjohnny. The hurkaru felt a powerful interest in the success of this scheme, and willingly assented to the proposal of accompanying or following them to Ougien, and giving his assistance. This accounts for his sudden disappearance, which took place shortly after Alraschid became entrusted with a command.

After the ladies had been safely lodged at Agra, with Hassen, the barber, he and Buccas were informed, by Ramjohnny, of what was likely to be Noorun's destiny, and both were prepared at a moment's further notice to do their best to intercept her convoy. Buccas, meanwhile, was busied in a hundred different matters, but the hurkaru was stationed near Ougien, to learn from Ramjohnny, the first indication of Noorun's removal, with which he was immediately to acquaint the fakier. The consequences of this are well known. When the two were made prisoners by the downfall of the tent, they

gave themselves up for lost ; but the captain, whose life Buccas had spared, proved his generosity by interfering to save them, and they were merely dragged along with the convoy, till within a day's march of Agra, where they were set at liberty. The captives rejoiced at having escaped so easily, and, on entering the city, repaired to a caravansary, devoted to the accommodation of strangers, when the first person who met their eyes was the fakier. He had been in Agra for several days, and was then just returned from the fort, into which he had gained easy access by means of a friend.

He, in the first place, pleased Ulluddeen not a little by telling him that his late master Abdulatiff had, after much trouble, succeeded in tracing out the fugitive Selim, and had sent him to Agra, where Aurungzebe was expected, under a powerful escort.

With respect to Noorun, he had no news, and declared himself much perplexed,—though of one thing he was pretty sure : namely, that Omar was in the city. His friend in the fort, Meer Khan, (who was no less distinguished an individual than a son of Etabar, the governor,) had hinted that a lady destined for Shaw Jehan was concealed till evening, somewhere near the Taj ; whilst Ramjohnny, therefore, kept a strict look out for any suspicious personages from a tippling shop, near the fort, Buccas and Ulluddeen directed their steps to that proud mausoleum. The Fakier, who seemed to know every priest and beggar in the empire, easily obtained admittance ; but Ulluddeen was ordered to watch outside.

The important discoveries and services of Buccas have been told ; and there remains but to state why he was so long in returning to the lovers, when he voluntarily set off for a boat. Before doing this, he repaired with the swiftness of a stag to the hurkaru, and giving him a curious copper ring from his finger, bade him hasten with the utmost diligence to the fort. He was then boldly to seek admittance to Meer Khan, which

would not be refused, and presenting the ring as a recognition, say the owner's life was in danger, and that he would endeavour to make for the fort, and obtain Meer Khan's protection, with some friends, if they could escape the murderers in pursuit of them. This order, Ulluddeen performed to the letter, and having received from Buccas the hurried sketch of what was the danger likely to occur, he stood on the battlements with the officer, intensely marking the boat-studded stream.

It so happened there were scarcely any vessels on that side near the fort, and the flight, pursuit, and murder, were all distinctly seen by them, and a portion of the garrison. Meer Khan, who was commander of the Golundauze,* instantly ordered two of the largest guns upon the ramparts to be charged with grape, and ready to bear on the magician's skiff, the moment it could be done with certain effect;—the consequences are known. Having made these few necessary explanations, we may now recur to our fore-mentioned muster.

This accordingly took place in one of the noblest palaces which line for several miles the Jumna. It was there Aurungzebe held one of those Ambulatory Durbars, which the frequency and rapidity of that vigilant monarch's journeys rendered customary during his troubled reign. Although the large and beautiful hall, in which the court was now assembled, fell infinitely short of the costly and gorgeous palaces at Delhi, it wanted not its crowd of splendidly dressed courtiers;—but we will not particularize these. Suffice it, that in the midst of them sat Aulumgeer, dressed plainer than any of his nobles, listening attentively to Alraschid, who stood, recounting the particulars of his late adventure.

“Your evidence, my son,” said the Emperor, “has corroborated much I was aware of, and confirmed many things which I suspected; and your story, taken in conjunction with what I previously knew of your haps,

* Artillery.

hazards, and hardships, is assuredly the most romantic which has occurred during our reign. But that a being, so atrocious and unnatural, should have so long tormented my people, is indeed strange, and to my personal vanity humbling, seeing the trouble I generally take to trace crime to its finest ramifications. Your account, moreover, goes a great way to palliate some part of Selim's conduct, though nothing can altogether exculpate him. Let him, however, be produced, in order that he may hear his doom."

Accordingly, in a few minutes, the late Ougien Rajah was brought into his presence. So dejected, woe-begone, and heart-broken appeared he, that Alraschid, despite the savage persecution he had experienced from the petty tyrant, could not help compassionating him.

The Omrah himself took no note of any one around him, but after prostrating himself before the monarch, and raising his hands, which were secured with shackles, to Heaven, in token of his being a slave, he fixed his head stubbornly on his breast, as if prepared for the worst,—nor once elevated his emaciated features.

"Selim of Ougien," said Aurungzebe, "you are now brought before us, as one whose head is bowed to the earth with guilt,—one whose head is heavy with crimes, as innumerable as its hairs. Although we have been wrong in attributing to you some acts of infamy and treason, Selim must, nevertheless, know he was art and part in most of his nephew's iniquities."

And here the monarch, expectant of an answer, threw his dark searching eye inquiringly on the prisoner; but not a word escaped the Omrah.

Aurungzebe seemed vexed at this contumacious silence, and after a pause he again proceeded:

"The Emperor of the Moguls," said he,—“has not been invested by the beneficent Allah with power, and made a ruler over many nations, to devote his time to the gratification of private vengeance. That time is precious as life, and should be applied to the making his

people virtuous and happy. It should be applied to the administering justice betwixt man and man,—and particularly betwixt the rulers and the governed. For if he will have hereafter to render an account of his stewardship, how much more imperative is it on him to exact a strict one from his delegates!—Freely then, Selim, do I forgive you all ingratitude, and every injury done or meditated against myself. But with respect to the cry of my people for justice, I can but allow justice to have her rights,—and by the Great Giver of justice, she shall never be thwarted by my hands.”

Perfect silence pervaded the circle, whilst Aurungzebe spoke, for although accustomed to a summary, and often severe, dispensation of the law, it was seldom that a culprit of such rank and consequence as Selim came before them.

“I will not,” resumed Aurungzebe, “attempt to recapitulate the heinous catalogue of your offences. I will not,” said he, with thrilling emphasis, “particularize the sickening massacre of this young soldier’s father,—the burning and plundering of his dwelling,—the barbarous torture of his mother. But I shall single out one act from many, of which, if you can clear yourself, I will then forgive everything else you have committed;—that is, the death of your brother. Clear yourself of that unnatural murder, or as surely as Mahomet is the prophet of God, you yourself shall die!”

During the delivery of this judgment, which was given with all the Emperor’s sternness and decision, Selim had trembled violently, but when it was closed by the breathless expectation of all present to hear his defence, he sunk gradually on the floor, as if he had been kneeling, and raising again his hands, exclaimed:—“Mighty monarch,—hard, yet just is the alternative you propose. Hard—for however innocent I may be, how can I, in these circumstances, and remembering the time which has elapsed since my brother’s death, adduce any proof

I may have of my innocence?—But I care not,—I am too tired of this world,—too miserable to dread leaving it. Life is but a series of pangs, which death will dissolve. Do, therefore, O king! whatever seems best with your slave.”

“Then,” said Aurungzebe, turning himself on the musnud, so as to avert his face from the prisoner,—“nothing else is left for it—lead him, Mohabet, to the elephant.”

“Stay!” exclaimed an aged man, pressing forward; who, though dressed in the utmost simplicity, advanced with perfect coolness and self-possession, through the innermost circle of the choicest grandees;—“Stay, Sire, and if I venture on a request, ’tis not otherwise than as a right; for remember, O Emperor! you promised me to ask, at pleasure, a boon, and it should not be refused. I now demand a boon.”

“Ask what you please, father Ibrahim,” replied the king, “save the life of this cruel traitor, and it shall be granted.”

“I ask nothing, Sire, but that you will not now, for the first time, compromise your word, but fairly and fully grant what I request.”

“I will grant nothing,” said Aurungzebe, angrily, “until I know the nature of your request. But why,” continued he, conscience evidently smiting him for treating with harshness so tried and trusty a friend, “why can father Ibrahim refuse to explain what he would have, and seems so earnest to obtain?”

“What I seek,” replied the Shaik, without manifesting the slightest perturbation or chagrin, “is, that you would respect as true the last declaration I may, in all likelihood, ever make before your highness. And if that satisfy you not, I may then, perhaps, confirm it by proof, however painful that may be to my feelings.”

“No one,” said Aurungzebe, “who knows father Ibrahim, can doubt his word. Whatever he vouches

can need little confirmation ; speak, therefore, and dissipate anxiety as to what all this may tend."

Father Ibrahim bowed slightly to this compliment, and then said :—" The magnitude of Selim's guilt, most mighty Aurungzeer, it is not for me to determine ; but of his brother's death, I pledge my life and honour he is innocent."

A buzz of astonishment ran through the whole Durbar at this extraordinary testimony ; whilst Selim raised his haggard countenance, and, with an expression of intense interest and scepticism, gaped, without moving a muscle, on the unlooked for advocate.

" Innocent !" reiterated Aurungzebe, expanding his eyes :—" Indeed, worthy Ibrahim, I cannot accredit your single assertion, unexceptionable as it may be, in opposition to the strong evidence we possess to the contrary."

But before this sentiment was well expressed, Selim had sprung forward from the careless hand of Mohabet, and clasped father Ibrahim in his hands, crying—" My brother ! my brother !" The spell of astonishment which held each individual dumb, was not broken for some seconds after this mysterious recognition. Aurungzebe was the first to speak.

" If this," said he, " be no plot, no cunningly concocted scheme, as I feel sure it cannot, since nature ever outvies the most successful simulation, then am I at once astonished and instructed—astonished at all I have seen, more especially, finding you, Ibrahim, the once wealthy Ougien banker—and instructed not again to confide too much in the testimony of those knavish spies, whom I of necessity use in procuring information. That this is your brother, Ibrahim, pledge your word—and he may go his ways."

" Assuredly then," answered Ibrahim, " this is my brother ;—though I may well be ashamed of the confession, and in me you behold the once wealthy banker :—but since your highness has graciously been pleased

to ordain that my pledging my word is sufficient to save Selim from a punishment he well deserves, I will not, at present, recount how he ruined and despoiled me, in conjunction with that miscreant Omar."

"Your own son," observed the king.

"My son!" exclaimed the Shaik, with indignation;—"No, no, he was no son of mine. That abortion, which all who knew, abhorred—was adopted by my wife Bestamia, and initiated by her in arts, in which he soon surpassed his preceptress. He never supposed but he was indeed Selim's nephew, and though the Omrah knew, of course, the contrary, he durst never undeceive him."

"I see everything," said Aurungzebe, "clearing as from a mist. So Omar having robbed you, by the unnatural sanction of your brother, persuaded him you were also murdered, and thus, for fear of informing, kept him in constant terror and thralldom."

"Just so, Sire," said Ibrahim.

"Most wise and upright monarch!" said Selim, without ever raising his dim eyes;—"If a word from one so unworthy as I am, may be listened to—my brother has but spoken truth. For if this be in reality father Ibrahim, his reputation for veracity and everything morally excellent is widely extended. This, all Ougien can vouch for, as well as many sage and good men who have been led to visit him from his reputation; and I may be ashamed to say, that although he has lived for many years within two miles of my own castle, I never saw his face as Ibrahim till now. I doubt not, therefore, that the unbroken tenor of his virtuous life will be respected. Nor is it but quite reconcileable with his character, that when weaned from the world's cares, a too far-stretched pity, (I will not call it fraternal affection) for me, should prevent him from avenging his wrongs, by denouncing me to your Majesty as a villain, when he acquainted you with the rest of his history. Present him with everything I have, if it so beseech your Majesty,

'tis but his own, and may prove some compensation for the cruel treatment he has experienced. For myself I have but one prayer, which, as it cannot be a selfish one, may perhaps reach favourably the ear of Aulumgeer,"—and he hesitated for some encouragement to proceed.

The Emperor, by his silence, showed a disposition to hear him, and Selim thus resumed :—

"I have an only daughter, O king! a most beautiful, and in every way an excellent child. She has long loved young Alraschid, and though I have hitherto crossed their love, thereby rendering them both miserable, 'tis my urgent request, before retiring for ever from the world, that you will issue your royal will, to discover what may have become of my daughter; and if restored, present her to the one she loves, and is so well worthy of her. She has been my treasure;—dearer to me than life, and was stolen by that being, who has been my bane and destruction—by Omar."—And as the Omrah concluded, a tear coursed slowly down his cheek.

"By the blessed prophet!" said Aurungzebe, "it shall be done, as much from the affection I bear Alraschid, as from justice."

On receiving this high encomium, our hero cast himself on his knees, and said: "Although your Majesty's slave is utterly unworthy of such distinguished expressions of his master's favour, it emboldens him to speak. Selim's daughter, after undergoing a thousand dangers and indignities, is now safe in Agra, and under a friend's honourable protection. I may add, that her preservation from an unworthy destiny, was mainly effected by the fakier Buccas, with whom your highness is, I understand, well acquainted."

"Then am I as happy," said Selim, "as I shall again be in this world. But if, O Aulumgeer! my intrusive voice may again be pardoned, I would earnestly inquire where this fakier can be found; for if I be not mistaken in that individual, I can disclose something concerning him."

"Then order him into our presence, Mohabet;" said Aurungzebe, "for we are unwilling to lose a particle of this day's strange discoveries and proceedings."

Accordingly, after a little delay, Buccas was introduced, accompanied by Ramjohnny. He was clad in a gay uniform, with his turban stuck affectedly on one side, and had altogether a martial air, strikingly different from the squalid appearance he had when devoted to mendicity and migration. He was, indeed, as stout and fine looking a young man, as any in Aurungzebe's wide dominions. The greatest astonishment, at this rare specimen of a fakier, was legible in the face of every one present,—not excepting the Emperor's.

"'Tis indeed he," exclaimed Selim, after he had for some seconds scrutinized Buccas's features,—“and another morbid and sleepless nerve of conscience is deadened! Ibrahim, son of Mirza, behold thy boy—he who has cost you many a useless and repining tear. 'Twas I who snatched him from his home and parents—and not the merciless Sipra, as you concluded.”

Ibrahim, on hearing these words, sprung forward with a vigour which belied his years, and seizing Buccas with one hand, he held him back by the other, scanning, meanwhile, with a falcon's eye, each lineament and feature. He then with quivering lip and agitated hand, (regardless of the Emperor's presence) unfastened the young man's sleeve, and gazed upon his arm, till his eyes were suffused with tears.

"It is my son!" exclaimed he, "it is indeed, Aulumgeer, my long lost son!—Could I doubt the testimony of his features,—this scar certifies his identity. How impious, O Heaven! have been the murmurings of my heart! The chastening of years has not been able to humble my soul before God's inscrutable decrees!"

"This is more and more wonderful," exclaimed the Emperor; "what has this day happened, is indeed worthy one of my ablest pundit's chronicling, for the amusement of our sons. We will retire, and listen to

the particulars of so strange a history ;—but, meanwhile, Mohabet, let a kilaut of price be in readiness. I had intended to bestow on my young general here, a portion of Selim's forfeited wealth,—but since Ibrahim has found a son, I must, in justice, appropriate it otherwise. As a small recompense, however," said Aurungzebe, smiling, "after espousing the fair Noorun, it is our will that the Omrah Alraschid succeed her father in the government of Ougien :—and I doubt not he will prove in every way a worthier successor."

Our hero, overcome with gratitude, and dazzled with the overwhelming honour, prostrated himself before the throne.

"Nor must we," resumed the Emperor, kindly, "pass over another individual who has done us no small service, and who has played a prominent part in these matters. I allude, Alraschid, to your esteemed companion, the hurkaru. He, who from friendship to you, and loyalty to me, left a good situation in our friend Abdulatiff, of Aggur's, service. It shall be our care to see him also promoted to some better situation near Ougien."

"Nor must Ramjohnny be forgotten, whose neck has long had a halter hanging round it, from the danger of acquainting us with much to our advantage, and intimately connected with these events."

Here the overjoyed Ramjohnny indulged in several of his most supple salams, whilst Aurungzebe continued: "I have, however, at present, but another topic to touch on, and that, Alraschid, regards your friend Ulluddeen. I hear a rumour of his affections being fixed in a certain quarter, where you have no small influence; I hope you will not oppose his suit."

Alraschid, smiling, bowed submissively his head, for his heart was much too full to speak.

It was now that Shaik Ibrahim, taking advantage of the silence, and his own partially regained equanimity, advanced, and after a reverential obeisance towards the

murder, said with some emotion ;—" Truly memorable, O mighty and merciful monarch, is the present instance of thy justice and generosity. Possessing, as I am proud to assert I do, the good opinion of your Majesty, I often feel emboldened to utter truths, which at first appear startling. And although futurity hangs too close to my thinly clad temples, to induce me to say aught that is untrue even in flattery, this consummation of Alraschid's fortunes has impressed me with a certainty, that real worth can never be concealed from your Highness' searching eyes. After my own delight, at witnessing a young and deserving friend basking in the envied beams of the illustrious Aulumgeer's favour, my next greatest satisfaction is to be able to acquaint you, that this is little else than what his noble birth, unbacked, even by his extraordinary virtues, might demand.—Sire, in the son of Ajimut you behold a descendant of that famous Aly Murdan Khan, who, being persecuted by the cruel Persian king, rebelled, and put your Majesty's father in possession of Candahar; after which he long lived in Delhi, highly respected."

The face of Aurungzebe was lighted up with an expression of pleasure and surprise, as Ibrahim solemnly made this asseveration. The great Omrahs too were silent for awhile, which was succeeded by an audible murmur of astonishment or incredulity. Meanwhile the eyes of Alraschid, who was pale, and excited, were riveted on the placid features of father Ibrahim.

" Yes," resumed the Shaik, glancing around the now all-anxious company, with a faint smile, which was soon chastened by a seriousness, intended to give authority to the elucidation :—" this young man's father, O Aulumgeer, was the hapless Ajimut of Ougien, he, who fell a victim to Omar's diabolical cruelty. Many years since, Ajimut, on promise of inviolable secrecy, confessed to me his birth and noble extraction :—this promise, Sire, I have kept, until the present circumstances render its developement, as I conceive, a duty. For, were I to

have passed away with such a secret closeted in my breast, I should indeed have deeply and irreparably injured my young friend."

Aurungzebe, whose piercing eye had been busily scanning the features of the most interested individual present, bowed slowly his head in assent to what fell from Ibrahim.

"Whatever father Ibrahim utters," said he, turning his eyes around his nobles, "has with us weight; and although the son of Ajimut's being of such distinguished lineage, can in no way increase or influence our love, yet ought rank ever to claim attention and respect. I wish, however, Ibrahim, we had more positive proof of what you have stated, than the simple assertion of an unknown and deceased old man."

"'Tis here, your Majesty," cried the Shaik, presenting one of the nobles near him with a small silver *casket*, in order to be handed to the Emperor, besides some valuable rings and trinkets; "this contains a few documents, which will completely put at rest any scepticism as to the fact, that Ajimut was brother of Aly, and, like him, became an exile, though in more lowly circumstances."

The king, having cast a hasty glance over the jewels, took up a packet of papers, which were neatly secured in a piece of green silk, and for a few minutes he, with his habitual intensity of mental application, was perfectly abstracted in its cursory scrutiny.

"God is great!" said he at length, shaking a few of the papers which he had selected:—"these at least are no forgeries. Here is the hand-writing and seal of Shaw Suffee, the late king, both of which are familiar to me—as also these of his father, the illustrious Abbas. God is great," said he, once more replacing the papers:—"we will hereafter peruse narrowly these most important proofs, and, meanwhile, confide in what Ibrahim alleges."

"Stand forth, Nawaub Alraschid," continued he,

laying an emphasis on the title, which was perceptible and intelligible to all;—"we offer you our congratulations on this discovery, and a sincere welcome to our court. It is unnecessary for me to say, this is the corresponding sentiment of all who are themselves welcome—" and his words were anticipated by the respectful looks and whispers of the ministers and chief officers of the empire.

The son of Ajimut, who had now recovered in some degree from the overwhelming nature of his feelings, advanced through the gorgeous and yielding knot of Nawabs which intervened betwixt him and the throne, and placing his hand upon his throbbing breast, he lifted slowly his eyes towards the Emperor, as he said:

"All powerful and munificent Aulumgeer, be my rank or rights of inheritance what they may, it will ever be my wish to remain your subject. You found me a beggar, encompassed by oppression, and with scarce a friend—you stretched forth a succouring arm,—preserved, enriched, aggrandized me. Permit me then, to remain your servant, and a living testimony of your justice and generosity."

The monarch was too great a proficient in the human heart, not to perceive that the most unfeigned gratitude dictated this speech, and he was himself of too generous a disposition, not to meet noble ingenuous conduct with equal magnanimity.

"Alraschid," replied he, with a courteous gentleness far from assumed, "shall choose for himself. If he prefer returning to the land of his ancestors and friends, it will be our care that he repair there attended, as befits the son of his distinguished and friendly father; but if he still decide on ornamenting our Court, and assisting us by his advice, or in the active administration of the laws, we appreciate too highly his sense and worth not to take advantage of the offer."

"Protector of the world!" said Alraschid, perceiving that the King paused for a reply;—"my ambition is

bounded by what your Majesty has already conferred. Nor is there anything wanting to make me supremely happy but a continuance of your favour."

"You have resolved then, my son," replied Aurungzebe, "to keep aloof from the difficulties and factions that at present perplex your country, and which is now subservient to the Persian sceptre?"

Alraschid bowed assent.

"Then," resumed the Emperor, "as I speak disinterestedly, you have in my opinion chosen no imprudent path. Little know you what persecuted nobility usually suffers—its brightest hopes in a moment smothered, and now lighted to be but again quenched—the fickleness, the falseness of friends, and the subtlety of enemies. All these are sufficient to make one loathe even that gewgaw diadem, so universally coveted, and which, unless his breast be warmed with more divine feelings, he would altogether, and utterly condemn. Kings, like prophets, are but the worldly instruments of the Supreme, and whether they be wise or simple, virtuous or unprincipled, they are but worthless tools, working out the inscrutable ways of Providence."

It was easily discernible, from the impressive manner in which this short monition was delivered, that Aurungzebe, who had himself both known, and been guilty of much political perfidy, had his own experience in view as he spoke, and doubtless several of the nobility then before him quaked, as they reflected on their wavering allegiance, during the Monarch's late serious indisposition.

Having finished his short address, the Emperor now divested himself of a splendid dark shawl, which hung negligently around him, and motioning to an attendant, it was instantly transferred to Alraschid's shoulders; whilst at the same time a gruff voiced herald proclaimed his lineage, with the addition of a long string of honourable titles and distinctions, which his fertile brain coined for the occasion.

We may remind our readers that the bestowing a portion of the royal raiment in this manner, is esteemed one of the highest honours which Asiatic princes can confer; and we may suppose that in this instance it was fully appreciated.

This important ceremony being finished, the assembled grandees now thronged round Alraschid, each appearing more urgent than the other in offering compliments and adulations. Amongst these were also Ibrahim and Buccas, whilst even Selim, who stood alone in a corner, with his arms crossed in a moody manner over his breast, betrayed, by his looks, the interest he took in the scene.

But there was another individual, who, although, at first, he was as evidently overjoyed at his friend's fortune as any one there, still hung back from tendering his congratulations. This was the hurkaru.

Father Ibrahim's astounding discovery had come like hail over his heart, and the sunny prospect of a long longed for bliss, which had become nearly tangible and embodied, was at once hopelessly eclipsed. He was standing the very pallid picture of a broken spirit, with his head half averted from the group of smirking faces around his friend, endeavouring to assume sufficient self-possession to advance and express his compliments,—but in vain; the gulf of despair which yawned around him, absorbed every idea, save that indirect miserable satisfaction, which often flutters around a generous unhinged mind—that his agony escaped all indifferent or sneering observance. In this, however, he was partly mistaken, for had his eyes been capable of looking carefully about, he might have detected the large bright orb of Buccas, glaring intensely on him; whilst, at the same time, a twist of his features, now infinitely more legible since he had discarded painting, might have acquainted any common observer that there was unquestionably some uneasiness stirring within him. Three of his

longest strides, seldom had recourse to, save when his restless noddle was busy, either with work or mischief, brought the quondam fakier along side his friend, whom he instantly saluted with such a slap on the back as nearly overturned him. Brought to himself by this uncouth salute, he was immediately addressed by Buccas, who still kept his broad palm where he had first placed it.

"What means this morbid reverie?" cried he,—
 "why, you stare like a started neil ghie!* cheer up, man, rally every jot of pluck you possess, for, believe me, I know your thoughts as well as I do the Nazarene brandy from almond sherbet;—cheer up, man, I say again, for may I take the black vomit, and the cramp, if you do not Alraschid injustice. He is staunch, and sticks to his words like treacle to the fingers. Advance, then, and wish him joy,—say something, were it only—Hem—God bless you."

"You have, as usual," answered Ulluddeen "a glimpse of what is passing within me, though you are wrong in saying I do the son of Ajimut injustice. No, Buccas, were I to expect that the promise of Alraschid, the trooper, or even Alraschid, the young officer, was binding by Alraschid, the Omrah's son, I should then do him an injustice."

"How so?" rejoined Buccas, sucking in one cheek, and assuming an air of vehement surprise. "Does then a name or title change his substance and verity, as 'tis said the Portuguese christianize turn chappatie† into their Saviour's flesh, whenever, and as often as they feel religiously hungry? None of your puny arguments with me; let my sins never be forgiven me, if I know not

* An animal in appearance betwixt a calf and a deer.

† A kind of biscuit or thin *scone*. Buccas here alludes we suppose to the sacrifice of the mass amongst the Portuguese, who at this time had a small factory in Bengal.

Alraschid better than to feel nervous at your dish-water doubts. Come along, I say,—what a kickshaw of a confidence are you plagued with ?”—Having said this, he, without reflecting one moment on the consequences, or the impropriety of the steps, took such a clutch of Ulluddeen, as left only the unpleasant alternative of following him with a bad grace, or having his sleeve torn to tatters.

It was perhaps fortunate for both parties, that, during the slight disturbance which Buccas' manœuvre necessarily occasioned, some little tumult took place, by means of Aurungzebe's preparing to leave the chamber ;—such a breach of decorum might otherwise have been visited by unpleasant consequences. Buccas, however, either was, or appeared to be, regardless of all this, and with many ceremonies and polite expressions, all of which came uncouthly enough from his lips, he pressed through the obsequious honey-tongued crowd, until he came within reach of Alraschid, whom he forthwith tapped on the shoulder as unceremoniously, though not so roughly as he had done Ulluddeen.

The son of Ajimut instantly recognized the hurkaru, and embraced him with the warmth of real friendship.

“There, I told you how it would be !” exclaimed Buccas, with a glow of exultation, and a crude caper, which even the presence of Mogul Majesty could not repress. “I told you” said he, “that Alraschid was staunch and true ; and though his lovely sister were rich and great, as her highness Rochinara herself, she would nevertheless be thine, O thou luckiest of all bipeds !”

“Fear not, my beloved friend,” said Alraschid, with a frankness which reached Ulluddeen's heart—“greatness were indeed ill bestowed, if it made me eschew truth and honourable bearing. No, no, Ulluddeen, we were friends and equals in lowliness ; we shall henceforth be so in prosperity.”

"Twere indeed a waste of time, and an ineffectual attempt, to dwell on the hurkaru's feelings, with any idea of depicting them, when he himself was unable; of the two, Buccas seemed most enraptured; slapping his thigh, he cried:—

"Spoken just as I could have spoken for him myself. I think more of you, (turning to Alraschid) for the last few mouthfuls of words you have uttered, than I ever did—and believe me when I swear, that I would sooner have seen yonder reverend newly turned-up dad of mine, strangled with a quick quinsy, than that he should have mumbled out a secret, which might have induced you to break troth with poor Ulluddeen—and" continued he, corrugating his right eye-brow in the same way he was wont, when revolving within himself anything uncommonly deep or sly, "had you done so, Buccas, the fakier, might have again sported his portentous piece of painting, (pointing to his face) and revenged a second time a lover's wrongs." Having uttered this with considerable feeling, he turned abruptly away.

Our story is now ended, and though comprised in less space than we contemplated, yet were we to enumerate the many happy days spent by most of these parties, it might easily indeed be made as long again.

Alraschid, who never envied the honours of his country, lived very many years an upright and respected governor in that same castle, the first visiting of which had swayed so powerfully his destiny.

Ulluddeen lived near him, occupying the important situation of Dewan, or collector of the Imperial revenue, —whilst Buccas settled himself as a merchant in Ougien, acquired great wealth, and what is curious, espoused Johorun, towards whom, from first sight, his heart had an inkling of affection.

As for Ramjohnny, he turned his cunning and civility to good account, by obtaining a situation in the Emperor's domestic service; and Jeebun, the burly Jemidar,

after superintending the cooking of many more dinners, at length died under his worthy master Abdulatiff, the Aggur Rajah.

Lastly, both Noorun and Rhada were as blest as mortality is permitted to be, with their respective lords, and both presented them with several sons and daughters, who, if they experienced not the adventures of their parents, are believed to have inherited many of their virtues.

THE END.

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